

# The Papal Monarchy

*a response to the book  
of His Excellency, Bishop de Sura*

Dom Prosper Guéranger  
*Abbot of Solesmes*



*In Cathedra unitatis posuit  
Deus doctrinam veritatis.*

(God has placed the teaching of the truth  
upon the Chair of unity.)

St. Augustine, *Letter to the Donatists*

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# Introduction

To the First English Edition  
of The Papal Monarchy

by: Gary Potter

No decade of the 19th century in France was without its heroes of the Catholic Faith. This is not to speak of the many saints produced in that nation during those hundred years, numerous of them long since canonized and others yet to be. But, we speak of bishops, priests, religious and laymen who set about rebuilding and then fortifying a Church whose total destruction was sought by the Revolution that had exploded politically in 1789, was already spreading around the world, and intended to become – as by our day it has generally succeeded in doing most everywhere in ex-Christendom – the dominating influence in the lives of individual men by substituting itself for the Faith in the life of society. In the middle of the century, Dom Prosper Guéranger, Abbot of the Benedictine monastery of Solesmes, was in the first rank of these heroes. He marched there alongside such fellow warriors as Edouard Cardinal Pie, Bishop of Poitiers; Ven. Fr. Emmanuel d’Alzon, founder of the Assumptionist Fathers; and Louis Veuillot, the journalist. Besides being fellow warriors, they were all personal friends.

If they and others like them are hailed here as heroes, it is a measure of how far the Church must go before she is again fully herself that most Catholics today, following the lead of too many limp-wristed clerics, would probably

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brand them as “fanatics” and the virile religion they upheld as “intolerant”. This even as it has become commonplace to describe the pope of the era, though today he is officially a Blessed, as the “infamous” Pio Nono.

Born in 1805 and deceased 70 years later in 1875, Dom Guéranger’s chief contributions to the renewal of the Church in his time and within France were the revival of French Benedictine monasticism, which he accomplished nearly single-handedly, and helping establish the Roman liturgy in place of the hodgepodge of diocesan rites that had prevailed since the rise of Gallicanism. For the Universal Church Militant he oversaw the rescue of pure Gregorian Chant, a precious treasure that was almost lost. More importantly, together with Louis Veuillot he did as much as anyone to beat back opposition to the definition as dogmas of two Catholic beliefs which, once defined, became *de fide* – “of the Faith”. That is to speak of beliefs men must hold in order to be able legitimately to call themselves Catholic.

These beliefs become dogmas are those of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, defined by Bl. Pope Pius IX in 1854, and papal infallibility, which was defined at an Ecumenical Council called the Council of the Vatican when it was summoned in 1869 by the same pope, but known by Catholics as Vatican I ever since that disastrous convocation of forty years ago, Vatican II.

It was in his daily journalism in the newspaper he edited, *l’Univers*, that Veuillot did his part to drive opposition to the definition of the dogmas from the intellectual field. Dom Guéranger’s weapons were two books. *Memoire sur l’Immaculee Conception* served in the case of the one dogma. *La Monarchie pontificale* served in the other. Not available to English-speakers before now, despite its impor-

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tance, the latter work now lies open before the reader in a wonderful, brand-new translation.

Though it often may be extremely difficult for us to see it and therefore believe, Heaven does always know what it is doing. That *Papal Monarchy* has finally become available to English-speakers at the beginning of the 21st century when it never was before, and especially to English-speakers in America, must be the work of Providence. Heaven doubtless perceived that whatever the state of the Faith in this country in generations past – Has it ever been really robust? – at least papal infallibility was not questioned in America, or not questioned openly by anybody who mattered, for decades after the dogma was defined. That being so, a book like Dom Guéranger's was scarcely needed. Now that the dogma is not so much questioned as ignored, like so much else, it will prove invaluable.

The book was written, first of all, in rebuttal to a two-volume work by Bishop Henri Maret, dean of the Theological Faculty of Paris, who signed it in the style of his titular see, Bishop of Sura. Then, before Dom Guéranger was done writing, the formidable Felix Dupanloup, Bishop of Orleans, the recognized leader of liberalism in Catholicism in the French episcopacy, came out with a book, and the Abbot of Solesmes completed his own by speaking to it. All of these books were appearing on the eve of the opening of Vatican I. They were meant to influence Catholic opinion in general, and the views of those who would attend the Council in particular.

Catholics of a certain age will remember that there was a similar jockeying of books for influence prior to Vatican II. One of the most notable on the "conservative" side was *The Plot Against the Church*, by "Maurice Pinay," pseudonym of



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the priest and author Fr. Saenz y Arriaga. Designed to thwart a planned Modernist hijacking of the Council by exposing it beforehand, it failed. Insofar as the bishops opposed to the definition of papal infallibility were driven back at Vatican I and *Papal Monarchy* contributed materially to their rout, Dom Guéranger's book was a spectacular success.

It was the objections to definition raised by the Bishop of Sura that cried the loudest for Dom Guéranger's correction in 1869. That is because Bishop Dupanloup, like Cardinal Newman of England and Americans at the Council who were not flat-out opposed to definition, did not object to the dogma as such, or so he and they claimed. They objected to definition on the ostensible grounds that it was "inopportune". If their objection became moot the moment a majority of the Council Fathers voted their approval of definition, a variation of it has arisen in recent years, and not from among liberals. Some Catholics calling themselves "Traditional" are taking the line that the dogmatic definition of papal infallibility was not so much "inopportune" as unfortunate. Thus, Dom Guéranger's treatment of Bishop Dupanloup's book is as timely for us today as the arguments and scholarship he marshals to rebut the Bishop of Sura.

It must be said that overarching all the objections to definition, and all of Dom Guéranger's arguments against them, there was one supreme reason why definition was desirable and even imperative, but it is only by allusion that the Abbot of Solesmes touches upon it. That is when, for instance, he writes of the influence of liberal-democratic ideas, even among Catholics, eighty years after the Revolution commenced. "Some men," he says, "saturated with these ideas to the point where they do not see that experience itself dooms them to failure, forget to put them aside when they are con-

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fronted with the divine constitution of the Church .... Those people, hearing talk about the personal infallibility of the Pope, unfailingly exclaim: That will be the end of representation in the Church! – as though it had been revealed to them that their political ideas are the eternal pattern from which the Savior Himself could never deviate.”

Now that not merely “some” Catholics are “saturated” by the ideas of liberal democracy but nearly all, it behooves us to be explicit in a way Dom Guéranger was not as to why definition was desirable, and as to why, more than two centuries after the Revolution began to unfold, our gratitude for what was done at Vatican I ought to be limitless.

Of all the ideas of liberal democracy adopted as a “pattern” for the life of the Church and by individual Catholics for the conduct of their own lives, none has been more pernicious than that of “freedom of conscience”. The poison of it was already widely spread by the time of Vatican I. In our day, the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church, is so full of it that the “cafeteria Catholic” is less an exception than he is typical. This is the man who accepts some Church teachings and rejects others (especially ones against something he wants to do), but fancies that he remains fully Catholic. To make matters worse, he can do this virtually without danger of being told by anybody – certainly not by most priests nowadays – that he is wrong. The one party left who certainly can and will tell him, at least when he teaches authoritatively, is the Pope. Indeed, the one who currently reigns, John Paul II has condemned cafeteria Catholicism and, by implication, the “freedom of conscience” it manifests, repeatedly.

As Dom Guéranger shows, it has always been known the popes taught infallibly, else the Council could never have been moved by the Holy Ghost to declare that they do, but we

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can and ought to be grateful that this power of theirs was buttressed by such means. (Councils never originate anything. Under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, they affirm what already exists, usually by defining it. The late James Cardinal McIntyre of Los Angeles, as witty as a man as he was distinguished as a prelate, used to express the view that the Holy Ghost was present at Vatican II, as at other Councils, “because He kept those guys from defining anything.”)

We may also be grateful to Dom Guéranger for providing the majority of the Fathers of Vatican I with the ammunition they needed in order to prevail at the Council, and providing us with the same for occasions when we are confronted by self-described Catholics who go beyond ignoring historical papal teaching to opposing it outright.

As for those who persist in ignoring it, we really should not concern ourselves with them, or the outright opponents, as much as we sometimes do. They scandalize us, yes, and scandal invites correction as Dom Guéranger corrected the errors of the Bishop of Sura. But if our correction is ignored as readily as papal teaching itself, we do better to invest our time and energy elsewhere than in obsessing over the doings of men of ill will. Things ultimately will work themselves out, Dom Guéranger explains why, apart from the fact that error always eventually exhausts itself, we can be confident of that.

He has been speaking of events and developments besetting the Church ever since the advent of the Revolution when he says: “The Church, which has a divine constitution, has been able to resist and shall resist to the very end; but she must contend with those maxims that undermine secular states and could lead them irreversibly into ruin, if God Who preserves this world for the sake of

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His Church, that is to say, for His elect – were not in His mercy watching over the salvation of the human race.”

He watches. His mercy, the name by which we have known His love since the Fall, will endure forever. Accordingly, so will His Church, the vehicle He has provided for our salvation. The infallibility of His Vicar on earth, the Pope, guarantees as instruments of salvation the Church and the Sacraments she provides, and their permanence. That is what Dom Guéranger tells us. Now that the sway of the Revolution is nearly universal so that no considerable part of the world any longer remains Christian – Which people could still be called Catholic without their protesting? – the message provides a comfort and assurance to us as individuals that scarcely any other can.

# Notes on Church History in France

by: Michael Miller

**“Gallicanism”** is a group of religious opinions which for some time was peculiar to the Church of France and the theological schools of that country. This view of the Church tended to restrict the authority of the Pope, while extending the competence of the bishops and the temporal ruler. Gallican theory acknowledged papal primacy, but claimed that it was limited by the power of princes, by the authority of a general (ecumenical) council, by the authority of the bishops, and by the canons and customs of local churches. According to this way of thinking, the decrees of the Pope acquire infallible authority only through the assent of the college of bishops, and the Pope must take the particular law and historical prerogatives of a local Church into account when he exercises his authority. Partisans of Gallicanism supposed that their system was a revival of the most ancient traditions of Christianity and called their Catholic opponents the **Ultramontane** party.

**Pierre d’Ailly** and the spiritual writer **Jean Gerson** (1363-1429) were also among the first advocates of Gallicanism. Gerson’s preaching and diplomacy in France were instrumental in healing the Great Western Schism, which began in 1378 with the election of a French anti-pope, shortly after the real Pope finally returned from

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Avignon to Rome. Matters were further complicated when a small council of bishops gathered in Pisa in 1409 and elected a second anti-pope. Gerson's **conciliar theory** maintained that a general council of bishops held supreme authority in the Church – whether or not the Pope participated or approved its acts. This must be understood as an attempt to restore unity in the Church at a critical time of extraordinary confusion.

Ultimately, the **Council of Constance** (1414-1418) resolved the conflict: the legitimate pope, Gregory XII withdrew, the two anti-popes were deposed, and a new pope agreeable to all, **Martin V** was elected. The Council of Constance also decreed that henceforth general councils should be held periodically; eventually the interval was set at every ten years. These historical developments unfortunately supplied a strong argument in favor of the “conciliar theory” which claims that papal authority is derived from and dependent upon the authority of the bishops gathered in a general council.

The **Council of Basel** [Basle, Bâle] (1431 – concluded in Lausanne, 1439) was convened by Pope Martin V as one of the periodic councils recommended by the decrees of Constance. Its purpose was to reform the Church “in its head and members”, to settle the Hussite wars, and to seek the reunion of the Latin Church with the Eastern Church. The proceedings of the Council of Basel had to be moved to Ferrara and later to Lausanne, and meanwhile a schismatic council or “conventicle” split off from the council proper, which led to confusion as to what decrees issued in the name of that council actually received papal approval.

**Pierre de Marca** (1594-1662) pored over archives and edited ancient judicial texts that were best calculated to lend

historical support to Gallican claims. **Jean-Baptiste Colbert** (1619-1683), a proponent of both Gallicanism and **Jansenism** (see note below), became controller of finances after the death of Louis XIV, and in the conflicts which arose between the Court of France and Rome, he used his far-reaching influence against Rome.

Gallican ideas were first organized systematically in the **Declaration of 1682** of the **Assembly of the French Clergy** during the reign of Louis XIV. The French Parliament applied inquisitorial methods to guarantee that these views would be held by all clergy, professors of theology, and seminarians. Pope Innocent XII refused to approve the appointments of bishops who had subscribed to the “Gallican Articles”. Eventually, in 1693, they wrote a letter to the Pope disavowing everything that had been decreed in the Assembly of 1682 concerning ecclesiastical power and papal authority. In spite of these disavowals, the Declaration of 1682 remained the banner and battle cry of Gallicanism, which was professed by the great majority of the French clergy, although it received only a lukewarm defense from French theologians.

Gallican ideas spread to the Netherlands, and to German-speaking lands as **Febronianism** through “Febronius”, which was the pseudonym of Johann Nikolaus von Hontheim (1701-1790), an auxiliary bishop of Trier. They influenced the development of State regulation of Church matters in eighteenth-century Austria (“**Josephism**”). At the **Council of Pistoia** in 1786, Bishop **Scipio de Ricci** (1741-1810) tried to acclimatize the Gallican Articles to the Italian ecclesiastical scene.

The fearless French philosopher, diplomat, and publicist **Joseph de Maistre** (1754-1821) once observed, “The

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Gallican Liberties are but a fatal compact signed by the Church of France, in virtue of which she submitted to the outrages of Parliament on condition of being allowed to pass them on to the Supreme Pontiff.” Indeed, the pretension implied in Gallicanism – that only the schools and the Church of France possessed the truth as to the pope’s authority, that they had been better able than others to defend themselves against the encroachments of Rome – was insulting to the sovereign pontiff and invidious to the other Churches.

De Maistre witnessed the ultimate distortion of Church-State relations in Revolutionary France with the passage on July 12, 1790 of pernicious legislation known as the **Civil Constitution of the Clergy**. Ironically, that same Revolution toppled the French monarchy, which had been the foundation and support of Gallicanism. De Maistre also lived to see the **Concordat of 1801** which Pope Pius VII signed with Napoleon on July 15, 1801 – an impressive manifestation of the supreme power of the Roman Pontiff.

Gallican ideas persisted in a few places and religious orders during the first half of the nineteenth century, until the decrees of the First Vatican Council sounded their death knell by declaring them, in effect, heretical.

**Jansenism** is a complex of theological ideas and moral teachings that became influential through the writings of **Cornelis Jansen**, Bishop of Ypres in Holland (1585-1638). The erroneous teachings of a professor of theology, **Michel Baius** (or De Bay) (1513-1589) on original sin, free will, and justification had paved the way for Jansenism.

In his influential treatise on the doctrine of Saint Augustine, Jansen made a fundamental error of disregarding the supernatural order. He equated the condition of our



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first parents, before the Fall, with human nature itself, ignoring what Scholastic theologians had called the “praeternatural gifts” granted by God to Adam and Eve before they sinned. This led to a grave misunderstanding of human nature and divine Providence. The moral system that followed from such notions was quite rigoristic. **Five Propositions of Jansen** were condemned by Pope Innocent X (1644-1655) as heresy. In 1713 Clement XI dealt a final blow to Jansenism with his encyclical *Unigenitus*.

**Port-Royal** was an ancient Benedictine Abbey which was influential in the religious and literary life of seventeenth-century France. The spiritual director of the nuns, the Abbé of Saint-Cyran made it a hotbed of Jansenism. Ultimately the convent was suppressed, the nuns dispersed, the buildings themselves destroyed, and the lands turned into a marsh

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## from Our Holy Father Pope Pius IX

*To Our dear son Prosper Guéranger, of the Benedictine  
Congregation of France, Abbot of Solesmes*

PIUS IX, SUPREME PONTIFF.

Dear son, greetings and Our apostolic blessing.

It is truly regrettable, dear son, that there are among Catholics certain men who, while glorying in this name, are thoroughly imbued with corrupted principles, and adhere to them so resolutely that they no longer know how to subject their intellect simply to a contrary judgment of this Holy See, even when that judgment is corroborated by the general consensus and recommendations of the Bishops. Instead, thinking that the progress and happiness of human society depends entirely upon those principles, they endeavor to incline the Church to their opinion, and, imagining that wisdom is theirs alone, they do not blush to designate by the name of “the ultramontane party” all the rest of the Catholic family which thinks otherwise.

Indeed, they take this madness to such extremes that they set out to recast even the divine constitution of the Church and to adapt it to more recent forms of civil government, so as to diminish more easily the authority of the

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supreme Ruler placed over it by Christ, whose prerogatives they dread. For this reason they boldly advance certain pernicious doctrines which have been condemned repeatedly, as if there could be no doubt about them, or as though they could be freely taught, at least; from old proponents of these doctrines they scrape together historical quibbles, mutilated passages, calumnies hurled at the Roman Pontiffs, and all sorts of sophistries. With the utmost impudence they bring all these things up again, completely setting aside the solid arguments with which they have been refuted a hundred times. Their purpose is to agitate minds and to incite the men of their faction and the ignorant crowd against the general consensus of the others.

That being the case, besides the harm that they have caused by troubling the faithful and reducing the most serious questions to the level of marketplace conversation, We are compelled to deplore their foolishness, which is equal to their audacity. For if they firmly believed, with the other Catholics, that an ecumenical council is governed by the Holy Spirit, and that can it define or propose dogmas to be believed only by His inspiration, it would never have occurred to them that things which are not in fact revealed or which are harmful to the Church could ever be defined as matters of faith, or that human maneuvers could ever impede the action of the Holy Spirit, or prevent the definition of truths which have been revealed and are beneficial to the Church.

They surely would not assert that it was forbidden to propose to the council Fathers, in a suitable manner, the difficulties that they consider to be in opposition to this or that definition, so that the truth might emerge more clearly from the debate. If this were their sole motive, they would hence-

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forth abstain from the stratagems by which votes are customarily gained in popular assemblies, and they would tranquilly and respectfully await the result of illumination from on high. Therefore, in Our estimation, you have rendered an extremely useful service to the Church by undertaking to refute the main propositions in writings of that sort, and by demonstrating their hostile, impetuous, and contrived character; you have accomplished this with such solid arguments, such brilliance, and such an abundance of evidence drawn from sacred antiquity and ecclesiastical science, that – conveying many things in few words – you have proved empty the pretense of wisdom of those who have wrapped their opinions in ignorant talk. In re-establishing the truth of the Faith, of right reason, and of history, you have acted in the interests of believers, whether learned or uneducated. We express therefore Our gratitude to you for the gift of this volume, and We predict an auspicious and very wide circulation of the work which you have produced by lamplight. As an augury of this success and as a pledge of Our paternal benevolence, We impart to you with great affection Our apostolic blessing.

Given in Rome, at the Basilica of St. Peter, March 12, 1870, the twenty-fourth year of Our Pontificate.

PIUS PP. IX

# Guéranger's Preface

When he published his book, *Du Concile et de la paix religieuse* [On the Council and Religious Peace], His Excellency, Bishop de Sura must have reckoned that it would stir up more than one objection. One does not attack the general consensus about such a serious matter without encountering some adversaries. Several learned replies have already been made, and the author of the book, who surely does not claim to have put an end to such a vast controversy in one fell swoop, should be neither surprised nor troubled by that. Bossuet devoted a part of his genius and some of his efforts to maintaining the teachings of Gallicanism; he did not succeed in making them victorious. Their reign was never extended, and the soil upon which they had seemed for a moment to be well established scarcely produces them any more today.

With his laboriously written work, Bishop de Sura made an appeal to all who are acquainted with ecclesiastical science [ecclesiology]. If he was presenting a treatise to the [First Vatican] Council, he was at the same time sending a book into the general public. I thought that, following many others, I would be permitted as well to weigh the value of the arguments adduced in favor of doctrines that I had studied in the contrary sense for my entire life. I regret only that a weakened condition slowed my work and pre-

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vented me from coming to the defense of Roman principles as promptly as I would have wished.

It is true that, in the course of my work, several incidental matters cropped up and led me to extend somewhat the dimensions of this polemic. Far be it from me to complain about that. The subject matter is serious enough to be treated under all its aspects. I have proceeded with the liberty that is proper to a theologian; in these days, when the last partisans of the Gallican maxims demand so loudly the liberty that nobody is denying them, they should not find anything wrong with the fact that those having other convictions are no less jealous of it.

I did not believe it necessary to insist, in the body of this treatise, on a matter of personal import; Bishop de Sura will approve if I say a word about it in this Preface. He glories in having in favor of his opinion the authority of three French Cardinals who were our contemporaries: Cardinal de Bausset, Cardinal de La Luzerne and Cardinal d'Astros.<sup>1</sup> I will pursue here a bit of literary history with regard to these three illustrious personages.

Cardinal de Bausset, after publishing his *Histoire de Fénelon*, was urged by the admirers of this fine book to devote a similar monograph to Bossuet. He yielded to their insistence and produced his *Histoire de Bossuet*. In this book, which is far from being up to the standard of the first, he gave free rein to his Gallican prejudices, and went so far as to present the Declaration of 1682 as the principal claim to fame of the bishop of Meaux. It seems, however, that the *Discourse on Universal History*, the *History of Variations*, the *Funeral Orations*, not to speak of the other works, are quite superior. As for the accounts given by Cardinal de

1. *Du concile général et de la paix religieuse*, Tome II, page 303.

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Bausset of the famous assembly, of the elements that composed it, and of the influences that motivated it, it would be impossible to countenance them today. The historical works on the seventeenth century produced during the last twenty years have revealed a situation too different from the one that was conventionally accepted at the time when the biography of Bossuet appeared.

Bishop de Sura seems to claim complete certainty as to the principles of Cardinal de La Luzerne. It would be good, nevertheless, to take into account the doctrinal deviations into which His Eminence fell. Cardinal de La Luzerne did not just publish an apology of the four Articles of 1682, a work which does little more than repeat in French the arguments of Bossuet in his [Latin] *Defensio*, apart from certain audacious statements which the bishop of Meaux would not have allowed himself to make. He is also the author of the *Instructions sur le Rituel de Langres*, a work filled with serious errors, especially [in the chapter] on “Marriage”, which prompted the *Ami de la Religion*, a publication which has not been suspected of ultramontane tendencies, to run two articles severely criticizing this heterodox book.<sup>2</sup>

Cardinal d'Astros may have favored Gallican doctrines, but it is certain that he left nothing in writing in favor of the Declaration of 1682. It is truly surprising, then, to see Bishop de Sura associate him with Cardinals de Bausset and de La Luzerne as one of the valiant witnesses to Gallicanism. He ascribes to him a work entitled, *L'Église de France*, published in Toulouse in 1843. A reader who does not know all about the controversy that started in 1843 and continued for several years, will imagine that this title indicates a book devoted to the defense of the Gallican maxims. It is, howev-

2. *Ami de la Religion*, volume XIV, 1818.

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er, nothing of the sort. Here is the full title of the book by Cardinal d'Astros: *L'Église de France injustement flétrie dans un ouvrage ayant pour titre: "Institutions liturgiques"* [*The Church of France unfairly dishonored in a work entitled: "Liturgical Institutions"*]. This volume, to which the author accused of injustice [i.e. Guéranger] replied, page by page, does not contain so much as one line in favor of the Gallican doctrines. Bishop d'Astros, who had not yet donned the Roman purple then, limits himself exclusively to an apologetic for the new Breviaries and the new Missals, which the *Institutions liturgiques* had attacked.

In revisiting this memory, I have no desire to recall the battles of an age already distant from us. The Church of France has come back under the laws of the Roman Liturgy. I blessed the Lord for this peaceful revolution, and I was allowed to do that, as much as anyone else; but I have never been heard to insist on the circumstances in which it was accomplished, much less on the part that I was able to play in it. If I recall anything concerning it today, it is solely because it seemed to me only fair to clear Cardinal d'Astros of a responsibility which he has not incurred.



# Part I

## The Papal Monarchy

*A response to the book  
by His Excellency, Bishop de Sura*

The publication of the book by His Excellency, Bishop de Sura, *Du Concile général et de la paix religieuse* [*On the General Council and religious peace*] is not an ordinary event. In making this assertion I do not mean to say that, in the practical realm, this work is destined to bring about any sort of revolution; one can say about it, however, that it is called to draw attention to certain latent and poorly defined ideas, the official clarification of which might well become a necessity by the very fact of this publication.

No one knows, and no one can know what will be the subject of the definitions that will be declared by the ecumenical council which will soon convene in the Holy Spirit; but everything tends to indicate that the remarkable step that His Excellency, Bishop de Sura has just taken will not be without effect upon the choice of subject-matters which the judgment of the infallible assembly could promote, from the status of more or less optional beliefs, to the status of dogmas of faith, understood as a theological virtue. If this result, which always benefits the Christian people, since it augments the sum total of defined truths, happened to be unfavorable to the teachings affirmed with such ardor by the prelate. One can be certain in advance that he would rejoice over his defeat, because, after the example of Fénelon, he would see therein the advance of the doctrine of the Faith,

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developments in which are won by the Church from one century to the next, by that *progress* which Saint Vincent of Lérins speaks of so eloquently, and which consists in a continual, uninterrupted succession of doctrinal definitions.

No theologian is unaware of the fact that every doctrinal definition has as its foundation the previous belief or practice of the Church, whether it be a question of a dogma which has been professed explicitly since the very beginning, like the divinity of the Word (which the Council of Nicea did not have to promote from the status of a more or less optional belief to that of a truth which henceforth would be obligatory, its task being, rather, to proclaim it with a unanimity and a solemnity that would strengthen believers in their faith and smash the audacity of Arius and his followers); or whether it be a question of a revealed truth that has long been believed implicitly in some other truth or truths which contain it, and from which it emerges over the centuries by the action of the Holy Spirit, Who guides in this direction the teaching of the pastors, the painstaking thought of the doctors, and the instinct of the faithful.

As long as the judgment has not been pronounced, there is no reason to be astonished at seeing some individual theologians applying themselves in good faith to supporting a thesis which later will be condemned. We have seen this in regard to the Immaculate Conception, a truth that was contested for several centuries by a school worthy of respect, until finally the question had matured to the point of requiring this definition, which was greeted with the acclamations of the Church.

His Excellency, Bishop de Sura has devoted his two-volume treatise to the defense of the principles which he upholds with such great conviction. He teaches in this work

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that infallibility in the teaching of the Faith is not a personal privilege vested in the Roman Pontiff; that the Roman Pontiff is not superior to the ecumenical council; finally, that he is not personally the source of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. His theories lead him to investigate the true nature of the Church's constitution, which he thinks is not sufficiently known and appreciated; according to the prelate, its completion consists of the periodic convocation and holding of ecumenical councils.

It would require a book four times the size of the one by Bishop de Sura to elucidate all the questions of fact which one finds collected in it. Fortunately this work is unnecessary; a peremptory response has long since been formulated to all the historical difficulties by means of which Gallicanism tried for too long to impose on the Church a different constitution from the one that she received from Jesus Christ. Availing myself of the liberty that every author gives to potential critics of a book that he publishes, I shall allow myself to present here some considerations on the questions posed by His Excellency, Bishop de Sura; as a preliminary I submit to the reader various objections which appear to me to be such as to invalidate considerably the significance of the book.

## **First Objection to the book by Bishop de Sura**

*The author seems to imply a state  
of warfare that does not exist.*

Bishop de Sura entitles his book: *Du Concile général et de la paix religieuse* [*On the General Council and religious peace*]. The first part of this compound title strikes the reader at first. In every age it has been possible and it shall be possible to write about the general council; the subject matter is rich enough to be treated more than once. The sanctity, the grandeur, the authority, and the constitutive features of the general council are something so important as to attract the attention and the study of theologians, journalists and historians. The approach of an ecumenical council makes it even more desirable, it seems, that a good, solid treatise be published on a subject of such sublime gravity which, for our generation, is no longer simply an historical memory, but will become the great contemporary event. Thus there is no reason to be astonished at seeing a bishop devoting his late waking hours and his labors to preparing a considerable work on this subject matter.

The second part of the title that Bishop de Sura has given to his book is as surprising, one must admit, as the first was charming. What, one wonders, is this *religious peace* to which such a book is dedicated? Where are the wars that it is supposed to prevent or to stop? To find out what the author is thinking, we hurry to dive into the book, and all at once we find ourselves in the middle of a heated

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polemic on the respective rights of the papacy and the episcopacy in a council. One wonders, then, whether this book, published in the year of grace 1869, had not been written in the aftermath of the Council of Basel, or whether it might not be a somewhat belated consequence of the reaction which the assembly of 1682 succeeded in producing here [in France], for a century and a half, in favor of the anarchical ideas of that pseudo-council.

The truth is that those momentary quarrels, the result of a trial to which the divine wisdom subjected Christianity during the fifteenth century, died down long ago and have only an historical significance. Today the holy Angels can say, in speaking of the Church, what the Prophet once said: "We have walked through the earth, and behold all the earth is inhabited, and is at rest."<sup>1</sup> All the bishops of the Church are preparing to assemble around their head in the Holy City, and there is no indication that they are coming with the intention of laying before the vicar of Jesus Christ their claim to an aristocratic prerogative, without which, according to Bishop de Sura, their apostolic authority is stricken with impotence. Not long ago, at the centenary of the martyrdom of Saint Peter, Christianity listened to the voices of three hundred bishops resounding in a solemn address to the Roman Pontiff, and it rejoiced to hear this sublime protestation of fidelity and submission, which declared that the most profound peace and the most intimate confidence reign between the head and the members.

Is the book of His Excellency, Bishop de Sura designed to change this sublime concord? There is no cause to believe it. The great schism is in the distant past. That tormented epoch which saw the Council of Constance, a

1. Zacharias 1:11.

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tumultuous assembly of eighteen thousand men, in which the members voted by nationality, has nothing in common with ours. Then, indeed, some anti-monarchical teachings forced their way through; it could scarcely have been otherwise: but the divine vitality of the Church would triumph over them, just as she will always triumph over obstacles. Are we now in the aftermath of the Council of Basel, that other assembly which never numbered even twenty bishops and which, going beyond the spirit and the letter of the decrees of Constance, made the ridiculous and culpable attempt to depose the pope and to create a new one? No doubt a school of pedants, men so theoretical as to be senseless, would result from all these movements; but time, too, would necessarily bring about justice. The calm succession of Pontiffs beginning with Martin V removed thereafter all pretext for prolonging the debates which unhappy circumstances had brought on, and which, by weakening respect for the Apostolic See, were not inconsequential with regard to the terrible rupture that divided Christianity in the sixteenth century.

In France, it is true, in the seventeenth century, the will of Louis XIV, followed with excessive servility by the Assembly of 1682, and assisted by the rivalries between the judicial courts and the clergy, brought on in this country a new outbreak of those unfortunate doctrines which the momentary anarchy of the fourteenth century had produced. Yet the bitter fruits of these theories which gave birth to the appeal to the future council, and later [in 1790] the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, discredited them little by little, until finally a divine grace, obtained by the blood of our martyrs, left for the Church of France no other way of justifying the legitimacy of its hierarchy, renewed from top to

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bottom by the immortal Concordat of 1801 and by the acts of the Apostolic See which ensued from it, except by recognizing explicitly that the Roman Pontiff is the source of the episcopacy. No force could prevent the emergence of the consequences from the principle. In another work I have cited, on this subject, the words of the bishop of Hermopolis before the Chamber of Deputies in 1826. They announced as a sure thing the triumph of the Roman doctrines in France. The peace that has ensued has been too firmly established ever since to be troubled by the publication of a book. One can therefore say now about the Church of France: *Terra habitatur et quiescit*. ["All the earth is inhabited, and is at rest."]

In the last [i.e. eighteenth] century, Germany had to undergo its trial as well. The constitution of the Church was discussed there in a way contrary to the Roman prerogative. Febronius had his day, and, as always, secular politics was active behind the scenes, hoping to profit from the divisions. The example of the French parliaments encouraged the court of Vienna, and [behold,] Germany had Josephinist laws. In 1786 it was no longer the bishop of Myriophite who was speaking in these terms; the archbishop-electors, gathered at the mineral waters of Ems, formulated their famous *ponctations* [points], in which they dared to express with regard to the Holy See several aristocratic rival interests borrowed from the theoreticians of the fifteenth century. This went against the traditions of Catholic thought in schools throughout Germany. The overturning of borders and military conquest soon annihilated this unfortunate attempt. Since then we have seen the episcopal assembly of Würzburg and the councils of Vienna and of Cologne testify, in the most eloquent terms, to their deference and their

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submission in all matters to the Apostolic See. It is therefore permissible to say about the Churches of German-speaking lands as well, except for a few lost children who can be found there as elsewhere: *Terra habitatur et quiescit*.

Shall we speak of Italy? It went through its crisis in the past [i.e. eighteenth] century; but its sense of being Catholic kept it safe. In vain Scipio de Ricci inserted the Declaration of 1682 into the Acts of his synod of Pistoia; his archbishop and almost all the other bishops of Tuscany refused to follow it. He himself ended by accepting the bull, *Auctorem fidei*. Tamburini and the other learned men of his school dogmatized in Lombardy, in the City-State of Venice, in the Kingdom of Naples; but they made little progress, and it was possible to see, in 1859, from the addresses given by all the bishops of Italy, with only one exception, how these prelates understand the papal monarchy. The influence of Minister d'Aranda in Spain and of Minister Pombal in Portugal (ed. note – both Freemasons) caused some new teachings on the constitution of the Church to penetrate into the peninsula. Pereira and some others did their best there; but good Spanish common sense did not yield to it, and in Portugal the success was mediocre. There is no reason, therefore, to think that the bishops of these countries are presenting themselves to the council with the purpose of obtaining an appeasement, at this moment when division is nowhere evident. I do not insist upon the Church in England, nor upon the Churches of the two Americas, nor upon those which report to the Propaganda Fide; all of the textbooks used there in the ecclesiastical schools [i.e. Catholic seminaries and universities] are in conformity with the Roman doctrines. Therefore one can say again of all these countries: *Terra habitatur et quiescit*.



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I conclude from this general situation that the polemical ardor deployed in the book of Bishop de Sura, with the purpose of appeasement, could very well be without any objective cause in the council, and I advance a second objection against the literary work.

## **Second Objection**

### **to the book by His Excellency, Bishop de Sura**

*The author has not sufficiently discerned the respective situations of the two Schools which he correctly places in opposition to each other.*

Bishop de Sura, from the very first part of his book, indicates to us that two Schools exist. He calls one the Italian School, having Bellarmine as its principal representative, and the other – the School of Paris, with the great name of Bossuet. The first of these two Schools recognizes the charism of infallibility in teaching the Faith and superiority over a council as personal attributes of the Roman Pontiff; the second accepts the pope as a judge of disputes about the Faith, but a judge whose sentences are not unchangeable, an authority which is no higher than that of a council.

Of these two Schools Bishop de Sura chooses the second and devotes his services to it. As for the first, he declares it to be very respectable, and in the course of his first volume he is pleased to designate it by the name of the Italian School. In the second volume he returns for a moment to this strange nomenclature, and admits in passing that the Italian School nevertheless includes some learned men from other countries. I would say quite simply that this manner of proceeding is strange, especially when one foresees that a book will necessarily fall into the hands of people who haven't the first notion about the subjects that are treated in it, and who will be misled into seeing in this a question of nationality. Bishop de Sura forgets that we are no longer at the Council of Constance, where the participants voted by nationalities.

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Within the Church there is the school of the doctors, which is composed of all orthodox Doctors of the Church, without distinction as to race or country of origin. Taken as a whole, they form one of the *Loci theologici* [means of theological proof], and their unanimity on a point of doctrine, even before the decision of the Church, already imposes the duty of submission. If theologians are in almost unanimous agreement on a point of doctrine, I would say that there would be no prudence in not taking this into account. Now it is a matter of fact that when one compiles a complete bibliography of the theologians from all nations who have written about the matters which Bishop de Sura treats in his book, the authors among them who support the Gallican theses make up not even three per cent of the total. To verify this may take a long time, but it is not difficult.

As for the French School, or the School of Paris, as Bishop de Sura says: in order to appreciate the extent of its authority, it is necessary to consider it at different times, because the most astonishing vicissitudes have taken place within it. From the thirteenth century to the beginning of the fifteenth, the University of Paris had no other doctrines concerning the rights of the papacy than those taught in that city by Saint Thomas Aquinas, and which he has recorded in his *Summa*. We will see later on that nothing could be more opposed to the Gallican system.

At the time of the great schism, we must admit, the School of Paris followed other erroneous ways. The Council of Constance was an arena in which the doctors of this School were emboldened to such an excessive degree, that the idea of constituting the Church *a priori*, with no regard to the fourteen centuries of its continuous existence, seemed quite natural to them. I am a bit surprised, to mention it in passing, that Bishop

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de Sura – so taken, in his two thick volumes, with the *episcopal aristocracy* that he unceasingly speaks to us about – manifests such relish for this very democratic assembly that is called the Council of Constance. A council composed of eighteen thousand members, of whom the bishops made up less than one twentieth of the total, is surely a bit threatening, not only for the papal prerogative, but also for the episcopal aristocracy. Bishop de Sura cannot be unaware of the fact that his School of Paris, down to its final days, was all for the divine right of curates in their parishes, just as it taught the divine right of bishops in their dioceses.

The School of Paris had declared its presence at Constance to such an extent that it provided aid and sympathy to the sad little Council of Basel. The schismatic assembly of Bourges in 1438 relied on it, too, in its insolent claims. In the following century, Protestantism burst onto the scene, presenting a severe object lesson for adventurous spirits. The Faculty sensed the need to steep itself again in the sources of the original Faith in order to confront the Innovators, and little by little it can be seen recruiting scholars imbued with respect for the Roman teachings. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, it had been transformed. The first half of this century was the great age of French spirituality; it is also the age in which the maxims sometimes called ultramontane reappeared at the heart of the School of Paris, represented by many pious and learned professors. Responsibility for teaching was in the hands the likes of André Duval, Maucler, Isambert, Gamache, Coeffeteau, Sponde, Louis Bail [Bayle], not to speak of the venerable rector of Navarre, Nicolas Cornet, the teacher of Bossuet.

It is important, therefore, when speaking of the School of Paris, to explain which one is being referred to, since a

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unity of doctrine did not prevail at all times in the sacred Faculty. Pierre de Marca, previously the Archbishop of Toulouse and appointed afterward to the See of Paris, which a premature death prevented him from occupying, not only personally affirmed the infallibility of the pope, but also gave in 1662 the following testimony on the state of theological teaching in the School of Paris: “The opinion claiming infallibility for the pope is the only one that is taught in Spain, in Italy, and *in all the other provinces of Christianity*; so that the opinion of the doctors of Paris must be relegated to the class of opinions which are only tolerated . . . . The power to pronounce an infallible judgment in matters of faith is vested in the Roman Pontiffs by the consensus of all the Universities, except for the venerable Sorbonne. [Editor’s note: Since we are commanded by Our Lord to “hear the church” (Matt: 18:17) in her judgments, not only do matters of faith oblige our submission to her supreme magisterium, but also matters pertaining to morals. Hence, in the definition of papal infallibility, promulgated at Vatican I in 1870, it was declared “as a dogma divinely revealed” that the Roman Pontiff is personally infallible when he speaks *ex cathedra* in defining doctrine “regarding faith *and morals*.” (Italics ours.)] But at this time we see this doctrine of the infallibility of the pope being taught even at the Sorbonne. Thus, on December 12, 1660 the following thesis was publicly defended at the Sorbonne: *Romanus Pontifex controversiarum ecclesiasticarum est constitutus iudex a Christo, qui ejus definitionibus indeficientem fidem promisit*. [The Roman Pontiff has been constituted the judge of ecclesiastical disputes by Christ, Who promised that his definitions would be unfailingly trustworthy.] We know that the same thesis was defended on December 7 at

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the University of Navarre.”<sup>2</sup> A little further on, Pierre de Marca adds: “The majority, not only of doctors of Theology, but also of doctors of Law, adheres to the common opinion, inasmuch as it rests upon foundations which are extremely difficult to subvert; this consensus of doctors, furthermore, laughs at the opinions of the old Sorbonne.”<sup>3</sup>

It was possible to see the strength which the Roman teachings had recovered in France during the first half of the seventeenth century, when the five Propositions of Jansen were condemned as heretical by Innocent X. Did anyone hear the followers of the bishop of Ypres protesting against the bull in the name of the principles taught by the School of Paris? Far from it; they accepted the judgment, without daring to take exception in the least to the infallibility of the tribunal which had just blasted the five Propositions. They felt obliged to agree that these five Propositions were worthy of anathema and sought an exaggerated interpretation of them, rather than to acknowledge that it was their own doctrine which Rome had just condemned; finally they attempted to evade the bull with a distinction between *de facto* and *de jure* [between matters of *fact* and matters of *law*].

The assembly of 1682, by declaring in its fourth article that the dogmatic decisions of the Roman Pontiff are not

2. Haec opinio (quae videlicet Infallibilitatem Pontifici romano asserit) est illa, quam unice Hispania, Italia, aliaeque omnes christianitatis Provinciae docent; ita ut illa, quam sententiam Parisiensium doctorum vocant, ad classem earum opinionum revocanda sit, quae solum tolerantur.... Auctoritas infallibilem sententiam in causis fidei pronuntiandi est romanis Pontificibus omnium Universitatum consensu acquisita, excepta tamen antiqua Sorbona. Imo hoc quoque tempore hanc de infallibilitate Pontificis sententiam in ipsa Sorbona doceri videmus; nam duodecima mensis Decembris anno 1660, in Sorbona publice haec thesis defensa est, videlicet, romanus Pontifex controversiarum Ecclesiasticarum est constitutus Iudex a Christo, qui ejus definitionibus indeficientem fidem promisit. Eamdem thesim in Universitate Navarica septima Decembris propugnatam scimus. *Observationes supra theses Claramontanas*. No. xvii.
3. Pars major non solum Theologiae, sed etiam Juris doctorum communi opinioni adhaeret, utpote fundamentis nixae solutu difficillimis; ridetque antiquae Sorbonae opiniones. *Ibid.* No. xxxiv.

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unchangeable in and of themselves, made it unnecessary thereafter for Jansenism to resort to this subterfuge. Once the rule of faith had been given to the entire Church on the controversies of that day, by Clement XI in the bull *Unigenitus*, the sect supposed that from then on it would no longer have to deal with the infallibility of the pope, and it earnestly appealed to a future council. Everyone knows what resulted from that, and what the consequences of that terrible shock have been for the Church in France. But let us trace back somewhat the course of events.

We have just seen, thanks to Pierre de Marca, that in 1662 the School of Paris had gone over almost in its entirety to the profession of the Roman doctrines. This was quite evident the following year, when a political faction resolved to induce the Faculty of Paris to subscribe to the six famous Gallican propositions which Louis XIV planned to use as a weapon in his unjust and equally cruel battle against Alexander VII. After suspending the trustee of the Sorbonne, they obtained no more than seventy signatures, out of the considerably larger total number of doctors in Paris.

From 1663 to 1682 the Gallican maxims gained ground in the Faculty; but even though human interests were in its favor, the transformation was not accomplished as quickly as the Court and the Parliament would have liked. At the time when Colbert wanted to have the School of Paris accept the Declaration that the bishops of the assembly had just signed and published, this school, in its various departments, numbered well above seven hundred fifty professors. After all sorts of coercion and attempts at inveigling, the minister and the Parliament had to be content with one hundred sixty-two signatures. And we have no right to be surprised to see Gallicanism progress at such a tottering

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pace, even in the bosom of the Faculty of Paris, when we hear the general procurator de Harlay, in a memorandum to Colbert dated June 2, 1682, recommend prudence in the steps taken with regard to the Sorbonne, for this reason, expressed in a rather naive way by a magistrate who was well informed about the situation: because *most of the members of the Assembly of the clergy would change their minds tomorrow, and gladly, if they were permitted to do so.*<sup>4</sup>

But I do not claim to be writing here the history of the varying views of the School of Paris. The fact is that Gallicanism was firmly planted in this body beginning with the compulsory recording of the Declaration in the registers of the Sorbonne, which had been seized and brought to the Parliament.

We have proof of the pressure that the civil authorities continued to exert upon the School of Paris, as late as the eighteenth century, in these words of the gentleman Tournely in 1739. His treatise *de Ecclesia* ["On the Church"], published in that year, contains the Gallican theses against the infallibility of the pope, but the doctor furtively allows this significant remark to slip out: "One cannot overlook the fact that it is difficult, given such a large number of testimonies which Bellarmine, Launoy and others have compiled, not to recognize as sure and infallible the authority of the Apostolic See or Roman Church; but it is far more difficult to reconcile these testimonies with the Declaration of the French clergy, *from which we are not permitted to deviate.*"<sup>5</sup>

4. See the documents in the *Recherches historiques sur l'Assemblée de 1682* [*Historical Studies on the Assembly of 1682*] by M. Charles Gérin.

5. Non dissimulandum, difficile esse in tanta testimoniorum mole quae Bellarminus, Launoius et alii congerunt, non recognoscere Apostolicae Sedis seu romanae Ecclesiae certam et infallibilem auctoritatem; at longe difficilior est ea conciliare cum Declaratione cleri Gallicani, a qua recedere nobis non permittitur. *Praelectiones theologicae de Ecclesia Christi*, vol. II, p. 134.



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Thus, intrigue and violence united to bring about this transformation, and the testimony of Fleury, which is scarcely to be questioned, informs us what sort of idea people had, as early as 1690, of the moral weight of these theologians who had rallied around the so-called *ancient* doctrines of Constance and Basel: “The *ancient* doctrine,” he says, “remained the province of doctors who are often less pious and less exemplary in their morality than those who teach the new.”<sup>6</sup>

It follows from the facts that I have just established that, when one speaks about the School of Paris as to the question about Roman doctrines, it is absolutely necessary to say more precisely which of them one has in mind, since there is the School prior to the great Western Schism, also the one that saw the light of day in the midst of the turmoil of the fifteenth century, the one that arose by a courageous reaction toward the end of the sixteenth and which was still full of life in 1682, and finally the one that proceeded from the good pleasure of Louis XIV and of Colbert, and opened the gates to appeals to a future council.

The admission of the general procurator, de Harley – who declares confidentially to Colbert on June 25, 1682 that they were no longer that certain about the authors of the Declaration that had been formulated and signed by them shortly before on March 19 – should not surprise us too much. Most of these bishops chosen by the royal power to make up the assembly had studied at the School of Paris, in an era when the majority of its doctors professed the Roman doctrines. Moreover these prelates could not overlook the fact that their fatal Declaration was in flagrant contradiction to the teaching of the previous assemblies. I am not speak-

6. *Discours sur les libertés de l'Église gallicane*. [Discourse on the Freedoms of the Gallican Church.] Edition of M. Emery in his *Opuscules* [Shorter Works], page 78.

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ing about the General Estates [*États généraux*] of 1614, in which the order of the clergy, through the instrumentality of Cardinal du Perron, had energetically supported the doctrine opposed to the first article; but as far as the personal infallibility of the pope is concerned, their contemporaries had been in a position to note on the part of the French episcopate a doctrine completely opposite to the one which they meant to publish in 1682.

In 1652 eighty-five French bishops wrote to Innocent X in order to request the irrefutable decision of the Holy See about the five Propositions of Jansen, deferring this judgment to him. Their letter began as follows: “The solemn custom of the Church is to refer major disputes to the Apostolic See, and the Faith of Peter, *which never fails*, demands by rights that this custom be preserved always.”<sup>7</sup> After setting forth the dispute, the bishops added, “Your Beatitude recently experienced how powerful the authority of the Apostolic See has been in combating error about the *two heads of the Church*. Immediately the storm was calmed, and the winds and the sea obeyed Christ’s voice and command. For this reason we entreat you, Most Holy Father, to render a clear and certain judgment on those propositions – a judgment to which Jansen himself, now near death, has submitted his work – and thereby to dispel all darkness, to reassure wavering minds, to prevent dissension, and to restore the tranquility and splendor of the Church.”<sup>8</sup>

7. Majores causas ad Sedem apostolicam referre sollemnis Ecclesiae mos est, quem fides Petri nunquam deficiens perpetuo retineri pro jure suo postulat.
8. Experta est nuper Beatitudo tua quantum apostolicae Sedis in gemini Ecclesiae capitis errore profligando valuerit auctoritas; continuo sedata est tempestas, atque ad Christi vocem et imperium venti et mare obedierunt. Quamobrem flagitamus, Beatissime Pater, ut clara firmaque de propositionum istarum sensu prolata sententia, cui reverend. ipse Jansenius morti proximus opus suum subjecit, caliginem omnem discutias, animos fluctuantes componas, dissidia prohibeas, Ecclesiae tranquillitatem splendoremque restituas. *Procès-verbaux du Clergé*, vol. IV.

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The following year, Innocent X issued the famous Constitution that condemned the five Propositions. The French bishops wrote once more to the Pontiff, a letter dated July 15, 1653, to express to him their gratitude for having put an end to this serious debate by his irrefutable judgment. The terms of the letter are too important for us not to reprint it here in its entirety.

MOST HOLY FATHER,

“We have received the long-awaited Constitution, in which it is clearly defined, by the authority of Your Holiness, what must be believed concerning the five controversial Propositions drawn from the book of Corneille Jansen, bishop of Ypres. The disputes which had been stirred up in Belgium were also ignited in France, and they threatened to engulf the universal Church in a vast conflagration, had not the indefatigable zeal of Your Beatitude and the power derived from on high (which alone could restrain that bitter debate) put a stop to the spreading contagion and the impending calamity.

“The matter in question was of the greatest importance: it concerned the access to salvation which we have through the necessary assistance of Christian grace, and the free efforts of the human will as it is aroused and sustained by this help; it also concerned the divine love of Christ for the whole human race and His beneficence toward all. The luminous doctrine which that modern author had obscured by his arguments was restored to its former splendor through the Decree issued by Your

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Holiness, at the request of a great many French bishops, in accordance with the ancient rule of faith founded upon the Scriptures and the venerable Tradition of the Fathers, upon the councils of old and, more recently, upon the authority of the Supreme Pontiffs.

“What was especially remarkable about this business was that, just as Innocent I once condemned the Pelagian heresy, acting upon reports from the bishops of Africa, so too Innocent X, based on consultations with the bishops of France, has proscribed a heresy which is diametrically opposite to that of Pelagius. Certainly, the Catholic Church of that ancient time, upheld solely by communion with the See of Peter and by its authority – which shone forth in the decree that Innocent issued to the Africans, and also in another letter of [Pope St.] Zosimus subsequently sent to all the bishops throughout the world – subscribed without hesitation to the condemnation of the Pelagian heresy.

“For she knew, this Catholic Church – not only in virtue of the promise made to Peter by Christ, Our Lord, but also according to the acts of the first Pontiffs, and in particular according to the anathemas hurled shortly before by Damasus against Apollinarius and Macedonius, although they had not been condemned by an ecumenical council – she knew full well that the judgments rendered by the Supreme Pontiffs, following consultation with the bishops (whether they express their opinion in written proposals [*in actis relationis*] or not, as they see fit) so as to establish the rule of faith, possess an

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authority which is divine as well as supreme throughout the Church, and that all Christians are duty-bound to render to this authority the submission [assent] of the intellect itself.

“We, too, being of the same Faith and opinion, and duly honoring the authority present in the Roman Church, which resides in the Supreme Pontiff Innocent X, shall take care to promulgate in our churches and dioceses the Constitution which Your Beatitude has composed at the instigation of the divine will, and which has been conveyed to us by the most illustrious Archbishop of Athens, the apostolic nuncio; and we shall urge the faithful people to put it into effect. Furthermore, those rash individuals who would dare to violate it will not fail to suffer the penalties that are imposed by law upon heretics, and, in keeping with the Constitution and the Brief which Your Holiness has addressed to us, we shall rebuke all who are obstinate, making no distinction as to their condition or state in life. This selfsame care pertains to the bishops as a body in France, a country where people would not tolerate the appointment of Inquisitors into the wickedness of heresy, and where ancient custom is observed in this regard, according to common law.

“We can promise Your Beatitude that nothing will happen which might delay the promulgation of the apostolic Decree or our solicitude in putting it into effect. We promise this with all the more assurance, since our most pious and most Christian King, to whom the most illustrious nuncio has conveyed the apostolic Brief together with a copy of the

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Constitution, has instructed His Majesty's Parliament and also, by virtue of his duty to defend the ordinances of the Church, sternly exhorts us by an edict which he has addressed to us, to hasten the execution of this [apostolic] Decree. Furthermore he commands all his magistrates and his other subjects to make every effort to assist and defend this execution, both by fending off violence and also by barring from the public forum the opposition parties that might be stirred up by persons guilty of heresy.

“Therefore, since the King of heaven has as His confederate in this matter the king of the earth (if we may speak in terms used by Sixtus III), Your Holiness, having crushed the enemies of truth now by the solidity of the Rock [Peter], can celebrate his triumph over the new heresy, without having to fear any foreign disturbance. As for us, offering our congratulations on this divine victory to Innocent X, through whom Peter has spoken, as the Fourth Council once said of Leo I in its acclamations, we shall be pleased to place among the sacred annals of the Church this Constitution which he has published, just as the ecumenical councils of old were accustomed to do....”<sup>9</sup>

His Excellency, Bishop de Sura cannot help but agree with us that the prelates who authored and signed this letter, less than thirty years before the Declaration of 1682, considered the dogmatic decisions of the Roman Pontiff to be unchangeable, even before they had been accepted by the entire Church; that they considered a dogmatic question to be closed as soon as the successor of Saint Peter had pro-

9. The Latin text of this letter can be found at the conclusion of the present work.

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nounced his judgment, and that they had no scruples about treating the opponents like heretics; that they did not venture to judge after the pontiff, whose judgments in matters of faith they proclaimed to be vested with a divine authority which was *supreme throughout the Church*, by virtue of the prayer that Jesus Christ prayed for Saint Peter, and in keeping with the documents of the Church's Tradition.

After Pope Alexander VII succeeded Innocent X, the Assembly of the Clergy in the year 1660 sent him a letter to assure him of its fidelity in following the teachings of the Chair of Saint Peter, and extolled in these magnificent terms the authority of the Roman Pontiff in deciding matters of faith:

“In you, Holy Father, we recognize that Mountain of the Lord to which all nations stream [cf. Isaiah 2], that is to say, they are carried onward just as streams are guided along by the channels through which they flow; so we tend toward you, so we are drawn by the influence of our love and esteem for you; for this is particularly the lot of the Gallican Church, to manifest toward the Apostolic See the reverence which is its due. To you alone we look up, as to ‘a rich mountain, a fertile mountain’, and as we tend our flock, over which the Holy Spirit has placed us so as to rule the Church of God, we call to it: ‘Why do you seek other fertile mountains?’ [Cf. Psalm 67:16-17, Vulgate & Douay-Rheims.] Certainly, we know no other fertile mountains but the Apostolic Mountain, where celestial doctrine is provided like milk to infants, or else as solid food to those who are strong. We ourselves are pastured upon this Mountain; as Saint Augustine says to his people: ‘We feed you, and we are fed with you.’ And since the Lord teaches upon this Mountain, there, too, we have decided (according to the words of Tertullian) to put an end to inquiry, to establish our faith, and to cease further investigation.

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“We hope, therefore, that your authority will come to our aid against those who, even after a doctrine of the Faith has been defined, indulge in wanton curiosity, disregarding the maxim of Marcian, who says that anyone who has accepted the truth of the Faith and yet seeks something more, seeks falsehood. In you, as in the successor of Peter, the strength of us all was confirmed when, after consultation with us, the response came from the Apostolic See countering this ‘science’ (falsely so called) which had usurped the doctrine of Saint Augustine and which was being disseminated in his name. This case is now closed. If some new development again comes to light, it will require but a word from you to ward off such great imprudence, as Flavian wrote to Pope Leo about the Eutychian heresy.

“Let truth arise; may it burst forth from its patient silence, fortified by your help; too long has it been hidden, to its embarrassment, in the interests of charity and clemency. May Your Holiness now apply a charitable severity. From your lofty observatory hurl your thunderbolts against a science which sets itself above the science of God. For our part, we shall gather the forces of the entire Gallican Church, and we shall fight in battle array under your auspices.”<sup>10</sup>

10. Te enim novimus Montem illum Domini, ad quem confluent omnes gentes, id est ea propensione feruntur, qua flumina per alveos suos; ad te ita fluimus, ita ferimur pondere amoris, et observantiae in te nostrae: cum hae partes praecipue sint Ecclesiae gallicanae, debitam apostolicae Sedi exhibere reverentiam. Te solum suspicimus, tanquam montem coagulatum, montem pinguem, et inclamamus attendentes gregi nostro, super quem Spiritus Sanctus posuit nos regere Ecclesiam Dei: Utquid suspicamini montes coagulatos? Nullum quippe novimus montem coagulatum, quam Apostolicum, ubi doctrina coelestis, sicut lac parvulis, bene autem valentibus tanquam solidus cibus ministratur. In hoc Monte nos ipsi pascimur (ut ait divus Augustinus ad populum suum): pascimus vos, pascimur vobiscum: et quia in eo Dominus docet, statuimus ibi secundum verba Tertulliani, finem quaerendi, stationem credendi, expunctionem inveniendi. Tuam ergo auctoritatem nobis fore praesto speramus adversus eos, qui omnem curiositatis libidinem offendunt post definitam fidei doctrinam, nec ad Martiani dictum attendunt, quo ait, cum quis post



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This letter, written with equal measures of dignity and of submission to the teaching authority of the Holy See, led to the Constitution of Alexander VII which condemned the distinction between [matters of] *fact* and [matters of] *law* and prescribed the signing of a *formulary*. This document, together with the previous formulary that was accepted by the assembly of 1655, attests to the teaching that was still current in the Church of France in 1660 concerning the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff. At the moment, however, I do not wish to draw any other conclusions from this two-fold document, which is authentic and official, besides the fact that it is wrong to speak as people do about the School of Paris without distinguishing historical periods, since it is well established that the teaching of this Faculty changed more than once on the points in question. Therefore one should not cite it as an authority for either side, but rather limit oneself to weighing the erudition and the orthodoxy of the doctors that it has produced.

This leads us quite naturally to Bossuet, whom Bishop de Sura considers an epitome of the School of Paris, just as he sees in Bellarmine the epitome of what he calls the Italian School. By no means do I intend to draw a parallel here between these two great men; but it is accurate to say

acceptam fidei veritatem aliquid amplius quaerit, mendacium quaerit. In te autem, velut in Petri successore, nostrum omnium fortitudo firmata est, cum ad consultationem nostram responsum ab Apostolica sede manavit adversus scientiam falsi nominis, quae in divi Augustini doctrinam invaserat, atque ejus nomine circumferebatur. Causa haec jam finita est, aliqua novitas iterum emergerit, indiget tantum insolatium, defensione tua, ut Flavianus de haeresi Eutychiana ad Leonem scribebat. Exsurgat veritas, et de sua patientia erumpat tuo munita praesidio, quae jamdudum abscondi erubescibat, adhibita charitate mansuetudinis. Adhibeat Sanctitas Tua charitatem severitatis, jaculare fulmina ex altissima tua specula adversus scientiam extollentem se supra scientiam Dei, dum nos totius Ecclesiae Gallicanae vires colligemus, atque instructa acie depugnabimus sub tuis auspiciis. (*Procès-verbaux du Clergé*, tome IV.)

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that, although Bossuet far surpasses Bellarmine in terms of genius, eloquence and grandeur of style, Bellarmine has other advantages over him. He is one of the first names in that pleiad [constellation] of theological scholars, not only in Italy, but throughout Europe (including the School of Paris at two periods), who have upheld with honor the Roman doctrines. He is honored, furthermore, by a decree of the Holy See, with the title of Venerable.

Bossuet, on the contrary, incurred on the part of Benedict XIV, who was a great theologian himself and a moderate and circumspect pope, a severe judgment, formulated in a well-known brief. Commenting on the *Defensio cleri gallicani* ["Defense of the Gallican Clergy"], the learned pope expresses his thoughts as follows: "It would be difficult to find another work so opposed to the doctrine which is received everywhere outside of France concerning the infallibility of the Supreme Pontiff when he defines *ex cathedra* and his superiority to any ecumenical council whatsoever."<sup>11</sup> Bellarmine, therefore, has over Bossuet the advantage of being in conformity with the general teaching on the questions we are dealing with, and Bossuet has the disadvantage of being among the minority of scholars. We have just seen how weak that minority is, all told. The Pontiff adds: "At the time of Clement XII, our immediate predecessor of happy memory, it was seriously debated whether to ban this work, and the final decision was to refrain from proscribing it, not so much because of the reputation of the author, who has deserved well of reli-

11. Difficile profecto est aliud opus reperire, quod aequè adversetur doctrinae extra Galliam ubique receptae de summi Pontificis ex cathedra definientis infallibilitate, de ejus excellentia supra quodcumque Concilium oecumenicum.

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gion on so many other counts, as because of the well-grounded fear of new disagreements.”<sup>12</sup>

Such an evaluation on the part of so serious a Pontiff, and the fact that he reveals to us, would considerably diminish the authority of Bossuet in these matters, even if we had no intrinsic reasons for not supporting it. In the Church, the doctrinal authority of an author is not derived from his genius and his eloquence, but rather from the agreement that exists between his teaching and that which prevails in professorial chairs and schools which are orthodox, principally those in the Church of Rome. It is a poor argument to have to say, as Bossuet does: “Let the Declaration depart whithersoever it will; we do not undertake to defend it here (gratifying though it be to see it so often acknowledged). The fact remains that the venerable opinion of the Parisian School is unshaken and free from all censure.”<sup>13</sup>

The great man has undergone an eclipse here. First of all, it is not honorable to abandon, as he does, this Declaration which cost him so much labor, which was imposed by might and main upon the Faculty of Paris, and on behalf of which a royal edict was issued. It is tantamount to admitting that the Assembly of 1682 acted with as much frivolity as temerity; let us say, more accurately, that it was not free in approving a literary work which its author disowns. As for Bossuet’s additional remark, that he will nevertheless adhere to the *venerable* doctrine of the School of

12. Tempore felicitis recordationis Clementis XII nostri immediati praedecessoris, serio actum est de opere proscribendo, et tandem conclusum fuit, ut a proscriptione abstineretur, nedum ob memoriam auctoris ex tot aliis capitibus de religione bene meriti, sed ob justum novorum dissidiorum timorem. *Epistola ad supremum Hispaniae Inquisitorem*.

13. Abeat ergo Declaratio quo libuerit; non enim eam, quod saepe profiteri juvat, tutandam hic suscipimus. Manet inconcussa et censurae omnis expers, prisca illa sententia Parisiensium. *Defensio Declarationis. Gallia orthodoxa*, § X.

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Paris, this is a diversion intended to mislead, though he cannot hope to fool the attentive reader. The venerable doctrine of the School of Paris is the one that that school followed from its founding until the turn of the fifteenth century, and this doctrine is the opposite of Gallicanism. Neither Bossuet nor Fleury has the right to characterize as *new* the doctrine which was set forth in this school at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and which succumbed only to violence, after having prevailed for almost an entire century. This doctrine was the ancient, *venerable one*; no other teaching had the right to assume this title in the University of Paris. There is no arguing with the facts.

Bishop de Sura says more than he perhaps intended, when he describes the doctrine of Bossuet on the constitution of the Church as *ecclesiastical liberalism*.<sup>14</sup> The current fashion is liberalism, and if we must deplore nowadays the division which has caused some men, distinguished for their talents, their services, and their influence, to go over to the Gallican side, it is possible to attribute their defection to the desire, above all else, to be considered liberal.

I will submit, nonetheless, a remark directed to Bishop de Sura. As a disciple of Bossuet, he cannot fail to be, like the bishop of Meaux, a staunch believer in *ecclesiastical liberalism*. Now, what is liberalism, if not a system according to which the most perfect equality must prevail among all the members of a given society? The culmination of this system is universal suffrage, with the right to supervise and even to change the sovereign, when that is deemed appropriate. Bishop de Sura, like Bossuet, exalts as much as possible the rights of what he calls the *episcopal aristocracy*; but nowhere do I see him accomplishing anything at all in

14. Tome II, page 325.

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favor of democracy in the Church. The only comfort is his invitation to reflect that the ranks of the episcopal aristocracy are closed to no one; meanwhile, however, the lower clergy and the company of the faithful have to look forward indefinitely to receiving orders and never giving any. In this, Bishop de Sura shows himself to be in conformity with Catholic doctrine; one cannot help but recognize it and congratulate him on it; but he is deceived if he claims to arrive at liberalism by that route. He is an aristocrat, whereas I wish he were a monarchist; but certainly neither he nor Bossuet, by claiming that the papal prerogative belongs to the episcopacy, acquires the right to call himself liberal.

Still, one ought to think about it. Experience has proved in the past that all blows aimed at the Apostolic See fall sooner or later upon the episcopacy, which finds therein its source as well as its defense. What was the Civil Constitution of the Clergy – that daughter of Gallicanism – if not a mixture of presbyterianism and laicism? Do you think it is by chance, that the liberal Catholics who recently sent to His Excellency, the bishop of Trèves [Trier] that strange letter, in which they are already taking precautions against the council, belong to the school called “ultramontane”? It is all too apparent that, by diminishing the idea of the Roman pontificate in their way of thinking, they have entrenched themselves to the point of formulating in advance their wishes with regard to the ecumenical council, even before it has assembled. I will not charge them with inconsistency, but I will not hesitate to identify in their doctrine the real *ecclesiastical liberalism*, the very name of which would have offended Bossuet, and which Bishop de Sura celebrates so imprudently.

The lesson, however, is within our comprehension, and in order to grasp it we no longer have to cross the Rhine. The

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*Correspondant*, a periodical which is scarcely ultramontane, has not hesitated to speak in praise of the letter from the liberal German Catholics to the bishop of Trèves [Trier], declaring that it adheres fully and completely to their doctrine.<sup>15</sup> More recently the editors published a lead article about the future council which was very liberal, to be sure, but consequently not very Catholic. From it the council will be able to learn, on what conditions it can count on the respect of liberal Catholics, who are not stingy with their advice, informing it about the manner in which it will have to go about its business, if it wants to issue decrees which are opportune and unimpeachable.<sup>16</sup> This is not the place to take up the scandalous propositions with which this article is filled; but I will recall that one of its authors, several years ago in the same periodical, spoke in praise of Monsieur Bordas-Dumoulin as a Catholic, even though he was not unaware of the fact that the latter's writings, full of heresies, had been condemned by the Holy See.<sup>17</sup> Bishop de Sura correctly notes that this writer is infected with the doctrines of Richer and other enemies of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.<sup>18</sup>

15. Issue dated July 10, 1869.

16. Issue dated October 10, 1869.

17. Issue dated August 1859.

18. Tome II, p. 266.

### **Third Objection**

#### **to the book by His Excellency, Bishop de Sura**

*The author, in his theological examination of the questions, proceeds in a manner which is incapable of leading to a certain conclusion.*

It is a fundamental principle of theology, that all revealed truths were confided to the Church at the beginning; that some were explicitly proposed for our belief from the start, whereas others, although contained implicitly in the first set of truths, only emerged from them with the passage of time, by means of formal definitions rendered by the Church with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, through Whom she is infallible.

It follows from this that in the study of positive theology, which is the basis of Scholastic theology, as we survey the monuments of ecclesiastical antiquity, we must not be surprised to encounter among the ancient writers some opinions more or less opposed to some points of doctrine which were later the object of a definition. Thus one finds, in the writings of a great number of Fathers, certain statements which in their day were still permitted, but which have since become unacceptable. The authority of these holy doctors is in no way diminished thereby with regard to other points of their teaching, because the error into which they may have fallen, being merely material, could not be prejudicial to their formal orthodoxy. In conducting the study of dogmas through the early centuries of the Church, it is necessary, therefore, to pay close attention to the period in which the Church perceived the need to settle its doc-

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trine on one or another point. Until that date, the language could be more or less vague, either because the doctors had neglected to attain precision on a question which nobody was discussing, or else because they had innocently held an opinion which, because of a subsequent decision, became heterodox. At the same time, we encounter in antiquity some explicit testimonies which are in favor of the future definition and which, at the proper time, will be gathered and form a *catena* or chain, so that the truth solemnly declared will be based simultaneously upon the *sensus communis* of the Church, which is always guided by the Holy Spirit, and upon certain traditional texts, formulated long before the definition had reached maturity.

On the subject of the rights of the Roman Pontiff, which are manifestly exercised from the very beginning of the Church, neither the popes nor the councils had thought to define anything explicitly, until the Greek schism – which was not accomplished until the eleventh century, and which stressed the denial of the rights given by Jesus Christ to Saint Peter and his successors – had made it necessary to state precisely the Faith of the Church on such an important point. The Second Council of Lyons and the Council of Florence, in their explicit definitions, formulated the Catholic doctrine on the papal monarchy, and God willed that, on these two occasions, the Greek Church and the Latin Church found themselves united in drawing up this common profession of Faith. The former, therefore, which wishes to have the Church's doctrine clearly defined as to the rights of the papacy, has only to study the decisions of these two ecumenical councils and in this case, as in every other case of this type, to interpret the documents and the writings of earlier times according to the definitive judg-



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ments, and not the judgments according to the writings and documents that preceded them.

Now, His Excellency, Bishop de Sura has done the second. Following Bossuet's argument in his "Defense of the Declaration", he has gone looking for proofs for his system in the periods preceding these two councils, seeking to lend an impossible degree of importance to facts which took place many centuries before the decisions in question. Even if he were in a position to prove, at least, that controversies concerning the infallibility of the pope, and the superiority or inferiority of the pope and the council with respect to one another, existed from the time of the general councils held in the East, one could still reply that, since these councils formulated no decree on the papal prerogative, one must still consult the two councils which dealt with it *ex professo*, in order to find out what this prerogative is. Yet not one word in all of antiquity reveals to us that these theories – unknown to the Fathers of Ephesus, of Chalcedon, of Constantinople, etc. – were ever debated before a relatively modern era, and then only in the Western Church. Photius in the ninth century, and Michael Cerularius in the eleventh, quite simply denied the primacy of the Roman Pontiff over the other bishops, and the East never intended to enter disputes about the questions that divide the Gallicans from the rest of the Church.

Therefore, if one wishes, one can rule out in advance by the same principle numerous pages by means of which Bishop de Sura would like to prove to us that Gallicanism is present throughout antiquity. The prelate does not cite one single conciliar act to which it might have been in conformity, and he refrains from mentioning a hundred others that are explicitly along the lines of the decrees of Lyons and of

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Florence. He puts aside, as well as he can, the testimonies of the Fathers of the Church, of which he cites only a few, although there is a cloud of such witnesses, and he does not see that, by reason of the decisions of Lyons and of Florence, these testimonies assume a new character of certainty and become fused with the explicit faith of Holy Church.

The host of facts, which Bishop de Sura has accumulated and presented in a light that is far from being genuine, could delude those of his readers who are strangers to ecclesiastical science; the others will not be surprised by it. They know that for most of the theses condemned by the Church at Trent and since, the fomenters of the proscribed doctrine have always been able to assemble a rather large bundle of texts and facts predating the definitive judgment, and that they have not failed to do so. They have made thick tomes out of them – witness, for example, the *Hexaples de la Constitution*, which the appellants [those who appealed from the judgment] published in six volumes in quarto (Amsterdam, 1721). Erudition, certainly, is not lacking in them; on the other hand, one can be sure of not finding there the passages from the Fathers who in such great numbers give evidence in favor of the doctrine vindicated by the Bull *Unigenitus*.

Bishop de Sura, writing after the councils of Lyons and Florence, would therefore have done better to make note of the doctrine of these two councils, rather than musing, with regard to the great synods of the East, about conflicts between the pope and the council, which neither the popes nor the councils even suspected in that era. He has reversed the true theological method, in trying to weaken formal decisions by means of facts that preceded them, instead of explaining these facts with the help of those very decisions.

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From the Catholic point of view, this is a serious mistake; from the simple historical point of view, it is an error. After all, if we see some councils confirming the decretals of the popes, we also see some councils confirming earlier councils. No one then had any idea about the shabby controversies which would arise so many centuries later, and this is an appropriate moment to recall the elegant saying of Saint Augustine: *Incauti loquebantur, quia nullus aderat hostis*. [“The heedless spoke, because no opponent was present.”]

## **Fourth Objection**

### **to the book by His Excellency, Bishop de Sura**

*The author has not taken into account  
the one real point of the issue.*

The question about the personal infallibility of the pope when he makes an *ex cathedra* definition in matters of faith, is above all a practical question. It is simply a matter of investigating historically whether the Roman Pontiffs have issued these sorts of decrees, and how these decrees have been received in the Church. If, therefore, we have seen the popes making use of their prerogative as infallible doctors and hurling spiritual thunderbolts against the obstinate; if, on the other hand, the Church has not protested against this mode of action, but on the contrary has never failed to consider as heretics those who have been singled out by doctrinal judgments of this type, then the conclusion to be drawn is, without a doubt, that the solemn teaching of the Roman Pontiff enjoys the privilege of infallibility. The Church would cease to be the Church that is preserved from all error by her divine Founder, if she tolerated a fallible voice teaching with impunity and with authority within her bosom, if she left the Faith of believers exposed to the risk of foundering in the presence of such a shocking scandal.

Now, it is a matter of fact that, since the beginning of the Church, the popes have made sovereign decisions in matters of faith, and have done so on numerous occasions; and it is also a matter of fact that the doctrines which they

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struck down were regarded as having been rightfully and canonically anathematized, without anyone protesting against the competence of the apostolic tribunal. This succession of *ex cathedra* teachings extends from the first three centuries, during which there had not yet been an ecumenical council, to the modern period, which opens after the Council of Trent with the condemnation of the doctrines of Baius [Michel DeBay] by Saint Pius V and concludes, for the moment, with the Encyclical *Quanta cura* published by Pius IX against the modern errors concerning social theory. The ecumenical councils, starting with the one at Nicea down to the one at Trent, present to us the action of the head and the principal members of the Church, expressing themselves in a common decision; but in the intervals of time which passed between these sacred assemblies, the Apostolic See has never been mute, and its teachings have always been received with complete submission by the entire Church. Only once was it seen that the partisans of the Jansenist heresy, placing their confidence in Article IV of the Declaration, appealed from the decision of a pope to a future council, and their appeal was viewed with horror by all true believers.

Given that the Church was established by Jesus Christ even in its infallibility, it obviously follows that within the Church a matter of fact has the same validity as a matter of law, and that from the moment when she treats papal definitions as infallible, they cannot fail to be so; otherwise one would have grounds for accusing the Church of prevarication or at the very least of imprudence, since she would be exposing the deposit of faith to corruption and thereby would be imperiling her essential mark of *holiness*. At this juncture we may recall the celebrated axiom

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of Saint Augustine: *Ecclesia quae sunt contra fidem nec probat, nec facit, nec tacet*. [The Church neither acts, nor approves, nor remains silent concerning things which are contrary to the Faith.]

The principal concern, then, of Bishop de Sura should have been to account for such a serious fact: a sovereign jurisdiction exercised by the popes in disputes about the Faith, and the obedience which the Church has always rendered to them on these occasions. He ought to have shown how this agreement down through the centuries in such a significant practice nevertheless does not establish ex cathedra infallibility in an irrefutable way, or else he ought to have accepted the conclusion that the vast majority of doctors draw from it. Bishop de Sura is persuaded that these numerous papal definitions were valid only because the college of bishops accepted them; he would be quite at a loss to prove this assertion. I defy him to find anywhere in Tradition a text which explicitly tells us that the dogmatic decretals of the sovereign Pontiffs had to wait until the bishops had confirmed them in order to be binding. Certainly this was not the understanding of the French bishops who sent to Innocent X the magnificent letter that I cited above. Did we not see how these prelates recognized the authority of apostolic decisions, as soon as they are made, to be *divine as well as supreme throughout the Church*, and at the same time how they declared heretics those who would refuse to give to them immediately the assent of faith?

Do we not find the same doctrine in the Church of Africa, at the time of Saint Augustine, when it is a question of the Pelagian heresy? Let Bishop de Sura reread the letters of the councils of Carthage and Mileve to Pope

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Saint Innocent I, in 417 A.D., and he will see with what ardor these particular councils solicit papal confirmation for their decrees against the new heresy, as the seal which will render them incontrovertible; let him reread also the replies of Innocent, and he will see how the pope, confident in the assent of all the churches, declares the privilege of Rome, and how doctrinal judgments handed down by that See on a point of dogma immediately determine the Faith of the whole world.

“Diligently and fittingly, then,” he writes to the Fathers of the Council of Mileve, “you have consulted the oracle of the Apostolic See (that See which, besides its external [temporal] duties, must take [spiritual] care of all the churches) in order to know what opinion must be held in these arduous matters. In so doing you have followed the provisions of the ancient rule which, you know as well as I, has always been kept by the whole world. But I do not insist on these things, nor do I believe them to be hidden from your knowledge. Furthermore, why else did you affirm it by your actions, knowing that replies always emanate from the apostolic fountainhead to those throughout the provinces who request them? Especially when questions are raised about the Faith, it seems to me that all our brothers and fellow bishops have only to refer them to Peter, who is the author of their name and their dignity, as Your Grace has just done, and thus the questions may be to the common advantage of all the churches throughout the world. For they must needs become more cautious, when they see the inventors of errors, based on reports from your two synods, separated from communion with the Church by the statutes of Our sentence. Your charity shall accomplish, therefore, a twofold good. You shall obtain the grace of having observed

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the canons, and the whole world will benefit from your good deed. What Catholic man, indeed, would henceforth want to have any dealings with the enemies of Christ? Who in any event would want to share the light of life itself through communion with them? No doubt everyone will flee the inventors of a new heresy.”<sup>19</sup>

It is evident that Saint Innocent regards his doctrinal judgment on the Pelagian errors not only as destined to unite all the Churches, but also as requiring their acceptance of it with submission and gratitude. Not the least bit of hesitation, which would result if there were any need for the decision to be approved by the college of bishops. What will the bishops of Africa do now? Before urging the execution of the apostolic sentence, will they inquire as to the opinion of the Patriarchs, to find out whether they and the archbishops and bishops in their jurisdiction are inclined to make up the outstanding balance by giving their consent to the apostolic judgment? Nothing of the sort: in their eyes the doctrine is established, and the Pelagians are heretics, pure and simple. Saint Augustine, speaking to his flock,

19. Diligenter ergo et congrue apostolici consultiis honoris arcana (honoris, inquam, illius, quem praeter illa quae sunt extrinsecus, sollicitudo manet omnium ecclesiarum) super anxiiis rebus quae sit tenenda sententia: antiquae scilicet regulae formam secuti, quam toto semper ab orbe mecum nostis esse servatam. Verum haec missa facio; neque enim hoc vestram credo latere prudentiam. Quid id etiam actione firmastis, nisi scientes quod per omnes provincias de apostolico fonte petentibus responsa semper emanent? Praesertim quoties fidei ratio ventilatur, arbitror omnes fratres et coepiscopos nostros nonnisi ad Petrum, id est, sui nominis et honoris auctorem referre debere, velut nunc retulit vestra dilectio, quod per totum mundum possit ecclesiis omnibus in commune prodesse. Fiant enim necesse est cautiores, cum inventores malorum, ad duplicis relationem synodi, sententiae nostrae statutis viderint ab ecclesiastica communione se junctos. Geminio igitur bono charitas vestra fungetur. Nam et canonum potiemi gratia servatorum, et beneficio vestro totus orbis utetur. Quis enim catholicorum virorum cum adversariis Christi velit ulterius miscere sermonem? Quis saltem ipsam lucem vitae communione paritari? Novae haereseos nimirum fugientur auctores. – D. Coustant, *Epistolae romanorum Pontificum*, Tom. I, col. 896.



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says on this subject: “The two councils concerning this case were sent to the Apostolic See: and now the rescripts [replies] from there have arrived. The case is closed, may the error likewise come to an end!”<sup>20</sup>

I have treated this episode at length, but one could cite fifty others this side of the Council of Lyons having the same import. Bishop de Sura believes that he has annihilated everything when he shows us Saint Cyprian resisting Pope Saint Stephen. Yet he does not mind that Saint Cyprian – who at that moment held a heretical doctrine concerning Baptism – cannot be alleged as an authority, even less so because his writings at that time show signs of a more ardent passion. Does Bishop de Sura know what was the tenor of the pope’s injunctions upon the bishop of Carthage? Was it simply a matter of a restraining order, or had the pontiff issued a definitive decretal? In the latter case, Gallicanism could not derive any advantage from it, since the pope upheld the Faith and Cyprian was straying on the path of heresy. The missing pieces prevent us from going any farther, but we know that Saint Cyprian was later reconciled with the Holy See. The Roman Church, which honors him among the principal martyrs – she who is so jealous of the bond of communion with her – could only have bestowed this distinction upon him following a repentance about which we have no written records (since they were probably destroyed by the heretics). This at least is the surmise expressed by Saint Augustine.<sup>21</sup>

Bishop de Sura, nevertheless, does not abandon this well-known war-horse; yet, following the example of his

20. Jam enim de hac causa duo Concilia missa sunt ad Sedem apostolicam: inde etiam rescripta venerunt. Causa finita est, utinam finiatur et error! *Serm. cxxxi. De verbis Apostoli*, X, 10.

21. *Epist. xciii, ad Vincentium Rogatistam.*

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predecessors, he makes it undergo a second evolution. Saint Stephen was right and Saint Cyprian was wrong; this is granted; but does not Saint Augustine say, in order to excuse Saint Cyprian somewhat, that until then the question of the baptism of heretics had not been elucidated in a *plenary* council? I in turn grant this; yet in order to gain anything from this argument, Bishop de Sura would have to prove to us that Saint Stephen had sent to Africa a dogmatic decretal defining the validity of Baptism administered by heretics, and not simply a canonical judgment forbidding, under pain of excommunication, the repetition of the sacrament conferred under these circumstances. In the first case, Saint Augustine (who teaches so explicitly that *the case is closed* once the pope has pronounced his decision in a matter of faith) would not excuse Saint Cyprian by alleging that the theoretical question had not yet been sufficiently elucidated. In the second case, it is convenient to allow the kind interpretation of the holy Doctor, when he reduces the wrong committed by Saint Cyprian to an act of disobeying the order of his superior. Indeed, the facts support this explanation. We have also the letter in which Saint Cyprian rendered to the pope an account of the resolution that had been passed in his Council of Carthage relative to the rebaptism of heretics. It concludes with these words: "In this matter we intend neither to do violence nor to dictate to anyone"<sup>22</sup> – proof positive that Saint Cyprian saw therein only a question of discipline. As for the pope's response, although it threatened to deprive the bishops in the Council of Carthage of communion with the Apostolic See, it abstained from deciding the question from the dogmatic side and only contained this formal order, the terms

22. Qua in re nec nos vim cuiquam facimus, aut legem damus. *Epist.* lxxii.

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of which Saint Cyprian himself has conveyed to us: "Let no one make any innovation beyond what is handed down in Tradition."<sup>23</sup> It was useless, therefore, to recall the expiated offenses of a holy bishop and martyr, and the incident proves to be entirely beside the point.

The history of apostolic decisions on matters of faith would be long, but easy to compile, and it is regrettable that Bishop de Sura has not undertaken it on his own. He would no longer tell us that, in the case of a definition by an ecumenical council in favor of the personal infallibility of the Roman Pontiff, this definition "would testify to the world that, until 1870, the Catholic Church did not know exactly and certainly wherein resided the sovereign authority which must govern it."<sup>24</sup> The Church always knew, and always had recourse to it. The definition, if made, would only raise an historical conclusion that is perfectly evident to the status of the explicit dogmas of the Faith. Meanwhile, the practice of the Church on this point will continue to testify to her belief, and that is all that Catholics need, as long as God does not judge it opportune to put an end to human debates.

23. Si quis ergo a quacumque haeresi venerit ad nos, nihil innovetur nisi quod traditum est, ut manus illi imponatur ad poenitentiam. *Epist.* lxxiv.

24. Tome II, page 381.

## **Fifth Objection**

### **to the book by His Excellency, Bishop de Sura**

The author does not seem to have an adequate idea of an ecumenical council.

The first compelling conclusion, for anyone who has seriously studied Church history, is that the ecumenical councils belong to the order of fact, and that in the Church they are by no means the expression of law. The Church could do without the ecumenical council. Her divine founder organized her on a sufficiently solid basis for her to be able to carry out her mission adequately, without any need for this gathering of the members of the teaching college, assembled to deliberate and to declare pronouncements in such and such a predetermined place. The ecumenical councils were brought about by circumstances that made useful and even morally imperative – whether it be to confound error, or to provide more effectively for the needs of governing the Christian society – this meeting of all the forces of the Church's hierarchy.

So it came about that the theory of councils was not formulated at first in the Church. They received the respect and the submission of the faithful, because people saw in them a solemn manifestation of the power of the teaching, governing Church in matters of doctrine, morality, and discipline; but it required long centuries before anyone thought of examining scientifically (within Scholasticism) the conditions under which an ecclesiastical assembly can claim to be an ecumenical council. Until then the Church's

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practice had regulated everything in this matter, and likewise in the matter of doctrinal decisions of the Apostolic See. It had sufficed for Christianity to perceive that the authority of the teaching and governing Church had been manifested in such and such a synod, in order for believers to bow before the decrees of this august tribunal, which has infallibility as one of its prerogatives. Instead of having to examine in detail the Faith of all the Churches, people had been blessed to hear them all give witness unanimously in a precise and formal decree.

But it happened that the Scholastic doctors, who applied themselves to the task of determining the essence of an ecumenical council and the conditions for it, were more concerned about the general notion of the Church represented in these sacred assemblies than about the factual circumstances in which several councils had taken place. They required, as essential conditions for holding an ecumenical council, that it be convened by the pope, that all the bishops in the world be invited, that either the Roman Pontiff or his legates should preside, and finally that it be confirmed by apostolic authority. These conditions convey perfectly the essence of an assembly destined to represent the teaching Church and to exercise all her rights; but one must admit at the same time that, among the ancient councils, there are at least two which are recognized as ecumenical, to which not all of these conditions are applicable.

The first is the second general council, the first of Constantinople, convened in that city by Theodosius, without the concurrence of Pope Saint Damasus, without the presidency of this Pontiff nor of his legates, and without the presence of any bishop from the West. In and of itself,

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therefore, it is only a particular council. When it was over, the bishops who were its members requested approval for what they had decreed from Saint Damasus, who at the same time was holding a council in Rome. The pope granted this approval, with several exceptions (one regarding the elevation of the See of Constantinople to the rank of second in the Church), and agreed that this assembly, and the confession of Faith that it had drawn up against the heresiarch Macedonius, possessed the same honor and the same authority as the Council of Nicea. Of the four conditions for an ecumenical council, therefore, the only one fulfilled by the First Council of Constantinople was confirmation by the pope; from which it follows that this confirmation is sufficient to make a particular council an ecumenical council. After noting this, could it be denied that the first criterion for a general council is the approval of the Apostolic See, which alone gives validity to all the rest and can supply what is lacking in this respect?

The second synod numbered among the ecumenical councils, even though it did not fulfill the conditions required for these solemn assemblies, is the fifth general council, the Second Council of Constantinople, held under Pope Vigilius. It was convened by the Emperor Justinian, who expected it to confirm the edict of condemnation that he himself had passed against the Three Chapters. Everyone knows that this name was used to designate certain writings by Theodore of Mopsuestia, by Theodoret and by Ibas which were tainted with Nestorianism. The theologian emperor had brought Pope Vigilius from Rome to Constantinople in order to obtain from him approval for his edict and the seal of apostolic authority. The pope felt obliged to issue a condemnation

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of these writings, which truly deserved censure; but the fear (ill-founded, as it turned out) that this condemnation might be prejudicial to the authority of the Council of Chalcedon led to complaints against the apostolic ordinance in Italy, France, Illyria, Spain and Africa. This opposition gave Vigilius cause to reflect. The Faith was not in danger, since those whom his decree had alarmed recognized the one person and the two natures in Jesus Christ. Therefore it was solely a matter of the stigma attached to the three authors who had supported the heresy condemned by the Council of Ephesus.

Justinian, however, who had ventured to produce a second edict against the Three Chapters, ardently desired to the very end to obtain the concurrence of Vigilius. The latter, fearing to trouble the Church by taking measures that could be dispensed with if necessary, proved to be unwilling to support the emperor's view of the matter. Wishing to reassure the minds of the faithful and to calm the disturbances that had arisen in the East, he had asked Justinian to let him hold a council in Sicily to which the Latins could travel more easily. At the emperor's refusal, he was content to ask simply for permission at least to summon to Constantinople a number of Western bishops equal to the number of Greek prelates that Justinian had assembled. The latter, together with the emperor, would not agree to this, and the council opened with one hundred sixty bishops. Vigilius did not appear at its sessions, and Eutychius, bishop of Constantinople presided. It was then that Vigilius, having withdrawn to another place, issued his decree entitled *Constitutum*, in which he explicitly forbade the council to make any decision in the matter of the Three Chapters. The assembly nevertheless continued its sessions and concluded

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by condemning in the most explicit and most harsh manner the writings of Theodore, Theodoret and Ibas, after which it dissolved. Justinian, angered by the resistance of Vigilius, sent him into exile as well as the few bishops who had adhered to his *Constitutum*, and he made so bold as to have the name of the Pope stricken from the diptychs.

Some months after the council closed, Vigilius, having reflected upon the confusion that a change in his conduct could bring about in the Church, considering that the condemned writings were injurious, and believing that he was now more enlightened as to whether such action was opportune, loyally issued a decree of condemnation against the Three Chapters and confirmed the decree of the council. So it was that this assembly, which had had no ecumenical character – neither convocation nor presidency by the pope, and probably no liberty either, since it was under Justinian's power – obtained ecumenicity for the decree that it had passed, through the assent of the Roman Pontiff. Many Churches of the West, fearing (though wrongly) that the result might be an indirect challenge to the Council of Chalcedon, resisted for some time; but soon the misunderstanding ceased, and they finally yielded, and the Council of Constantinople was accepted as the fifth general council, despite its lack of canonicity, by virtue of its confirmation by the Holy See.

Bishop de Sura, throughout the course of his two volumes, keeps on citing the fifth council as an invincible argument for his system. From the fact that Vigilius finally acceded quite freely to the measure that the council had passed, he concludes that the council had the upper hand over the pope, and brought him around to its opinion. This is to forget that the council, in the first place, was only an



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assembly of bishops which did not represent the universal Church; in the second place, that there was no question whatsoever of defining an article of faith, since the pope and the bishops shared one and the same doctrine (that of the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon), that it was simply a matter of knowing whether it was opportune to censure certain books infected with an error that had already been condemned; in the third place, that the bishops refrained from any attack or any procedure against the pontiff who refused to follow them, and who would not deign to preside over them during the course of their gathering; finally, that the council was already dissolved when Vigilius, acting independently on his own authority, but yielding to the anxieties of his conscience, revoked the decree of suspension that he had published during the council, so as to return to the position stated in the one that he had issued at first.

One wonders how these facts can come to the aid of the Gallican utopia, and how Bishop de Sura was able to see an ecumenical council in that assembly of Greek bishops, with Eutychius of Constantinople presiding. In his view, the main strength of his book is to be found in this incident; it seems to me, however, that he has not sufficiently reflected upon its true import. Yes, I would say to him, the fifth council is ecumenical, but it was not so while it was in session. Like the second council, it only became ecumenical by the will of the Apostolic See.

Nor does Bishop de Sura appear to have grasped the meaning of Saint Gregory the Great, when that Pontiff writes to the Patriarch of Constantinople that he accepts and venerates the four councils of Nicea, Constantinople, Ephesus and Chalcedon as equal to the four Gospels, and that he professes a similar respect for the Second Council of

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Constantinople. The word “council” used here by the saintly pope does not refer to the conciliar discipline, as Bishop de Sura thinks. The questions debated in his book had not yet been raised and would not be for a long time. Saint Gregory is speaking about the Faith proclaimed and defined in these venerable assemblies, about their creeds and doctrinal decrees, and that is why he compares them with the Gospels; the councils have elucidated that Evangelical teaching by establishing the Faith that every Christian must profess concerning the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father and of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son, and concerning the unity of Person and the duality of Natures in Jesus Christ. Furthermore the holy Doctor concludes this confession of Faith with these words: “Whoever thinks otherwise, let him be anathema! Whoever holds the Faith of the aforementioned councils, peace be upon him!”<sup>25</sup> Therefore one must not look to this text of the holy Doctor for confirmation of any theory about councils, especially since two of the five councils cited owed their ecumenicity only to the authority of the Holy See.

Another idea of Bishop de Sura pertaining to the ecumenical council seems to me to require some attention because of its novelty. The prelate teaches that sanctity and infallibility are essentially united in him or in those whose teaching is held to be infallible, so that the second would always presuppose the first. From this principle he concludes that, since the pope is not necessarily holy (as he demonstrates with an exaggerated profusion of historical examples), he cannot possess the privilege of infallibility in teaching the Faith. The council, on the contrary, is assured of this infallibility, seeing that “there is no doubt

25. Epist. xxv, lib. I, indict. ix.

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that a general council which represents the universal Church would also include some saints; and it is not a *vain* title, that of being *holy* or *sacred*, which is always given to these assemblies.”<sup>26</sup>

I will not pause to point out what this doctrine might have in common with certain propositions which the Church has condemned, in which it was maintained that the presence of sin in souls deprived the priestly character of all its efficacy, entirely revoked the authority of a magistrate, or annulled all property rights of an individual. I will limit myself to noting that the immediate consequence of this doctrine is the non-infallibility of an ecumenical council, if by chance it had no saints among its members. How many of them must it have? Is one enough, or should there be several? By what means can we be sure of the presence of this element, without which the infallibility of the doctrinal decrees produced by the council is immediately placed in jeopardy [*périlite*]?

It is true *de facto* and also *de jure* that the Catholic Church possesses some saints in the company of the faithful, and this is one of the practical applications of its mark of Holiness; but in order to ascertain juridically that such and such a person is a saint, one must first wait for his death and conduct a twofold investigation into the heroic quality of his virtues and the authenticity of the miracles worked by his intercession. This takes us a bit far afield. Of course, there is always the great trial in the Valley of Josaphat; but we cannot wait until then to know whether the decrees of a council were or were not infallible. Let us grant, and not doubt – surely it must have been the case – that one or another council had its saints: who will vouch

26. Tome II, page 254.

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that these saints, during the deliberations of the council, were always part of the majority, that they were not to be found sometimes among the minority? Certainly, at the Council of Nicea, Saint Athanasius, along with several other holy bishops who have been raised to the honor of the altars, were numbered among the three hundred and eighteen Fathers; it is well known that they are not to be found among the minority of the seventeen Arians. But where would this new theory lead us, when we turn to the other councils, no less venerated until now, and discover that not one of their members is in the catalogue of Saints? No, an ecumenical council does not need this sort of verification; there is no requirement to scrutinize the sanctity of its members; it has the right to be called *holy* and *sacred*, because of its divine mission and the august character of its head and its members, because of the presence of Jesus Christ in the midst of it, because of the promised assistance of the Holy Spirit. Yet, by the same token, the Supreme Pontiff has the right to be called the *Holy Father*, because of his title as Vicar of Christ, Foundation of the Church, Pastor of the sheep and of the lambs, universal Doctor, and finally, Source of that spiritual power which begets saints throughout the Church by the teaching of the Faith and by the licit administration of the Sacraments.

But it is precisely in order to abolish, if possible, the personal infallibility of the pope that Bishop de Sura has launched into such an astonishing theory. It is inconceivable to him, he tells us, short of a miracle, that a man who is not a saint could be infallible; but does he think, then, that an assembly of several hundred men (who, as he allows, are not all saints) could be any more so without divine intervention? What we do know is that Jesus Christ *has prayed for Peter*,

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*that his Faith fail not*, and that He has given him the grace and the strength *to confirm his brethren*.<sup>27</sup> What we do know is that Jesus Christ, in making this promise, had in mind the entire series of successors of Peter who make up one and the same person with him, not with respect to sanctity, but as to the power to teach and to govern. This utterance of Jesus Christ gives us confidence, and the Church's Tradition and practice confirm it; for eighteen centuries the dogmatic decisions of the Apostolic See have the force of law throughout Christendom, just as soon as they are known.

"In order to make a holy pope personally infallible," Bishop de Sura tells us, "God would have to work a great miracle, the scope of which we have examined. In order to make a sinful pope personally infallible, He would have to work a still much greater miracle; because this miracle will produce infallibility in the bosom of sin; because this miracle will separate sanctity from infallibility, that is to say, will bring about an effect without the concurrence of a *cause* which seems *essential* to its coming about [*qui semble naturelle à son évolution*]."<sup>28</sup> From that it would follow that because someone is a saint, he or she is *naturally* infallible. How can that be reconciled with what Bishop de Sura says a few lines previously, that "sanctity, although it appears to be a necessary condition for infallibility, does not confer it in and of itself," and that "a saint is not guarded, by sanctity alone, from a host of errors"<sup>29</sup>?

I admit that I have little taste for this theology which, apart from the contradictions and the novelty, claims to set arbitrary limits to the power of God over His creature. Bishop de Sura knows as well as I that inspiration is a gift

27. Luke 22:32.

28. *Ibid.*, page 254.

29. *Ibid.*

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superior even to infallibility. Has he then forgotten that God conferred this inspiration upon the unworthy prophet Balaam, who had come to curse Israel, and whose tongue, divinely directed, uttered the most magnificent oracles about the destiny of this people, and concerning the sacred Star that would rise from its midst? Has he then forgotten that Caiphas, the chief instigator of the deicide, when he had put on the ephod, *being the high priest that year*, experienced divine inspiration and announced that Jesus was going to die for His people, and not only for His people, but to gather together in one the children of God that were dispersed throughout the world?<sup>30</sup>

The Church demands less than that. She received no promise of inspiration; her divine founder deemed that infallibility would be sufficient, and neither pope nor council has a claim to anything else. Certainly, the gift is quite magnificent; but pope and council possess it only by means of a divine influence which causes the pope, though a sinner, always to declare the truth *ex cathedra*, and (what is still more marvelous) causes the episcopacy, of which each member is fallible, always to be infallible as a body, so that it will never be separated from its head.

This is the truth of the Catholic Faith; nevertheless theology will not designate this divine result, which is called infallibility, as a “miracle” in the strict sense, any more than it gives this name to the supernatural effect produced by the Sacraments. Infallibility in the pope and in the council, just like the effect of the Sacraments, occurs by virtue of divine institution; neither one can fail to take place when the conditions established by Jesus Christ are satisfied. A miracle, on the contrary, is a departure from a predetermined order;

30. John 11:51-52.

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thus is it wrong to place the question about the miraculous here at the outset. It suffices to recognize God's supernatural action in these various works, in which He operates and shall operate as long as the Church continues to exist, by means of the conditions that Jesus Christ has determined.

There are many other remarks that could be made about the way in which Bishop de Sura understands the ecumenical council, but we must limit ourselves. In any case it seems to me that one cannot help but find him at least imprudent in the vehement tirade which he believes he must indulge in against a possible definition of the personal infallibility of the pope. "It would overturn," he says, "the entire Christian institution, abolish the almost nineteen-hundred-year-old divine rights of the episcopacy, change the constitution of the Church and change its doctrine also, deny Catholicism, and bring about the triumph of all the enemies of Christianity, which would bury us in shame."<sup>31</sup>

Frankly, Bishop de Sura forgets too often that the council has not been convened yet. When the council opens he can speak this way, if they permit it. But if, on the other hand, the majority of the bishops were of an opinion contrary to his, if the definition which he fears so much came to be declared – would he not feel some regret at having thus provided ammunition himself to the enemies of Christianity? God alone knows what the outcome will be, and we can rely on the action of the Holy Spirit, Who will assist the council. But is there not cause for consternation at the fact that Bishop de Sura prosecutes so vehemently a doctrine which has been upheld by the immense majority of doctors, openly and with the knowledge of the Church over the centuries, not to speak of the saintly Fathers who teach it in their writings.

31. Tome II, pages 374-378.

## **Sixth Objection**

### **to the book by His Excellency, Bishop de Sura**

*The author applies to the Church criteria  
for human [secular] governments.*

In founding His Church, Our Lord Jesus Christ was certainly free to give it whatever form He in His divine wisdom deemed appropriate. He could be bound neither by human precedents nor by the ideas which are called modern, since He foresaw from all eternity their aberrations. It would be blasphemy to pretend that He was obliged to accommodate Himself to the capricious notions of the creature, and it is the duty of the latter to accept humbly everything according to His disposition. The constitution of the Church, therefore, is the object of faith. We must take it just as Jesus Christ has decreed it to be for us, and we would run the risk of being dashed against the reefs if we took it into our heads to judge it by means of comparisons with the earthly arrangements which man has established, and which vary unceasingly according to circumstances of race, in conformity with the times, and (too often) pursuant to the passions.

In the Church the believer is sheltered from the trial-and-error and instability of the world. The power within it was established by the God-Man in an immutable fashion, and no one could ever change the conditions under which it is exercised. It was the good pleasure of Jesus Christ that Christian society be ruled and taught only by the pope and by the bishops. Their titles are inscribed in the Gospel and



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explained by Tradition and the Church's practice. Resting upon these foundations, every Catholic must believe and profess that, in the sacred hierarchy, the bishops take the place of the Apostles, and that the pope takes the place of Jesus Christ. All arguments, all claims give way in the presence of this twofold truth, from which it follows with the utmost clarity that the bishops owe submission to the pope as the apostles did to Jesus Christ, and that the pope governs the bishops and teaches them as he teaches the rest of the flock, just as Jesus Christ, whose Vicar he is, governed and taught His apostles. Hence the saying of Bossuet: "Pastors with respect to their people, sheep of the flock with respect to Peter."<sup>32</sup>

A system in which the one upon whom the Church is built would find himself, in the final analysis, built upon those who rest upon him and who have no stability except through him; a system in which the one charged with strengthening his brothers would not be certain of possessing the truth unless he were confirmed by them; a system in which the one charged with feeding not only the lambs but also the sheep could not lead the sheep except with their consent – this system would be in flagrant contradiction with the institution established by Jesus Christ. Now, is this not the system that Bishop de Sura teaches constantly throughout the course of his published work? Let us not dwell on the magnificent words with which he is pleased to clothe the papal monarchy; does he not endlessly repeat that the pope is only infallible when he is in agreement with the bishops, who have the right to judge and depose him if he should think otherwise; whereas we know that it is the bishops who derive infallibility from their agreement with him,

32. *Sermon sur l'unité de l'Église* ["Sermon on the unity of the Church"].

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whose duty it would be to judge them and depose them, if they were to separate themselves from his teaching?

What does the Vicar of Christ become in the system of Bishop de Sura? This head, whose might and grandeur he was vaunting a moment ago, is nothing more than a subordinate. In reading the Gospel we would have thought that the apostles were established upon Peter, and now it is Peter who is established upon the apostles. The Faith of Peter could not fail, founded as it is upon the special prayer of the Savior; from the power of this divine prayer, “which the Father always hears,”<sup>33</sup> Peter would derive a faculty of teaching to which his brothers would owe their firmness and would escape the danger of being sifted as one sifts wheat; and here is someone telling us that Peter, if he wants people to accept the Faith that he formulates, needs to have his brothers verify the teaching that he proclaims from his lofty chair! Peter must feed the entire flock, the lambs and the sheep, and now the lambs cannot trust his word until the sheep have judged that one can safely comply with it! Jesus Christ had given to Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which in biblical language signifies the scepter of authority in the Church; and now the laws passed by the authority of Peter no longer have value unless they are accepted by his subordinates! Let us say, rather, that he no longer has any subordinates; for now he holds no more than an executive power, which Bishop de Sura claims to subject to general convocations [*États généraux*] that would be held every ten years, while in the meantime he would remain under surveillance!

How could a respectable prelate come to uphold such a doctrine? Solely because he has lost sight of the principle

33. John 11:42.

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that we have established above, concerning the uselessness of comparing the constitution of the Church with those of worldly States: the one being divine and unalterable, whereas the others are human and changing. Bishop de Sura betrays the basis for his thinking when he tells us: “No one, *today less than ever, no doubt*, will manage to make reason and conscience admit that pure and absolute monarchy, as the ordinary system of government, is the best of all.”<sup>34</sup> Judging from this sort of language, does he not seem to mean France in 1789, in search of a constitution? Yet, I would say to Bishop de Sura, why is there any need for the Church, after eighteen centuries, to expound, with her own mission in mind, on the merits of this or that system of government? Has she not received hers from a divine hand, and is there anyone under the sun who can change the form of it? What do the ideas of *today* matter? It is too late! We have only one duty to fulfill: that of thanking the Son of God for having spared men the trouble of constituting His Church, in that He Himself has set at its head this immortal apostle who is its sole foundation, the universal Doctor and Pastor.

Let us listen again to the prelate, and note more and more the extent to which he is under the spell of the thinking of the day. “Without approving,” he says, “all the political theories that have arisen in modern times; without granting any sort of amnesty to all the revolutions that have taken place, one can affirm that, in the society which has issued from the Gospel, there is no tendency that is more imperious, more lasting, or more invincible *than that which intends to set limits on power, which seeks to counterbalance and offset it*.”<sup>35</sup> Nowadays, because in the worldly order, populations – or rather those whom they allow to lead

34. Tome II, page 383.

35. Tome II, page 384.

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them blindly into the pit of revolutions – fancy that by bringing authority low they can attain a degree of social stability that always eludes them. Bishop de Sura therefore thinks that this is a reason for the Church, which is experiencing no need whatsoever for a constitutional convention, to beware of tendencies which would be ill received in this century. At the moment Bishop de Sura is forgetting that the Church is for all ages, and that she must not sacrifice to any one of them; furthermore, that she was established long ago, and by a competent hand.

But let us continue: “And it would be in the midst of this Christian society, so profoundly obsessed by this need to regulate power, that the Apostolic See would proclaim, as a new dogma of the Faith, that God established in His Church a pure, absolute and indivisible monarchy, *because it is the best possible form of government!* What would it profit the Faith to place itself in such direct opposition to the most certain data of experience and reason?”<sup>36</sup> I understand a little better now, I will admit, how it is that Bishop de Sura does not accept the judgments of the Apostolic See unless they have been verified by another authority. To hear him speak, one would think that we were in danger of seeing a dogmatic bull published which would command us to believe in the *pure, absolute and indivisible monarchy* of the Roman Pontiff, not at all because Jesus Christ had established it in that way, but because this is *the best possible form of government*.

Bishop de Sura is on guard here against a contingency about which I have no knowledge (nor does anyone, assuredly); but I would venture to say that an apostolic decree that would derive its justification from a question

36. *Ibid.*

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concerning the purely natural order, such as knowing what is the *best possible form of government*, would not satisfy the conditions for a doctrinal judgment in a matter of divine revelation. Such a question is not among those which naturally concern the Church, seeing that, when it is considered in the abstract, revelation furnishes nothing that could resolve the question definitively, and if one wishes to consider it in the order of fact, the solution depends upon a thousand contingent human circumstances, over which the Church has no control and no competence. Thus, Bishop de Sura can rest assured: the *Faith* will in no way oppose *the most certain data of experience and reason*. Whether it emanates from the pope or is issued by a council, we will never see a doctrinal decree published unless it is the expression and clarification of revealed truth, and is at the same time based, not upon the rational findings of philosophy or political science, but rather upon the previously and generally held faith of the Church in a matter of revelation.

This is how a preoccupation with the social trends of today led Bishop de Sura away from the subject that he meant to treat, and how without noticing it he moved into the field of politics, while thinking that he was still on the familiar ground of theology. If I wanted to press the issue, now that he has got himself into this situation, I would return to a point that I only touched on earlier in passing, and I would ask him – him, who a thousand times in his two-volume opus insists on the *episcopal aristocracy* as the main point in the topic that he proposes to deal with – whether he thinks that the contemporary social movement (which he wants the Church to take into account even in her doctrinal decisions) is any more in favor of the aristocratic principle than the principle of pure monarchy.

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Meanwhile, trends notwithstanding, he does not consider himself obliged to lower his tone of voice or to sacrifice his principle. May he leave in peace, then, those who, while venerating this sacred aristocracy, are intent on honoring in the first place the no less sacred monarchy that Jesus Christ established and to which He gave the keys of government; may he let them follow the teachings of the Gospel and of Tradition, and may he beware of unchaining that democratic tendency which is the basis of the current political movement. Who ever heard of simple Catholic lay people (except perhaps at the time of the councils of Constance and Basel) expounding upon the prerogatives of an ecumenical council which has not even opened yet, or daring to draw up a program of what it must and must not do? The letters from Koblenz and Bonn are there for all to read, and the article in the October 10 issue of the *Correspondant* is clear enough. *Et nunc intelligite*. [And now, understand.] Bishop de Sura had better believe it: more than ever the measure of respect that the episcopate maintains, in our age of independence, will be in proportion to the respect that the episcopate itself shows for the Roman Pontiff. The hallmark of Catholic piety today is veneration for the pope: it is the grace of our time. Hence the innumerable pilgrimages undertaken solely to “see Peter”,<sup>37</sup> the continual enlistment of men to defend the temporal realm, the millions of donations that never stop pouring in. In this age of rebellion against all authority, God has evidently willed that the highest manifestation of power, the Papacy, should be unceasingly in the ascendant instead of declining. There is found the salvation of the world; yet at the same time it follows that, in the opinion of the Catholic people, the episcopate will only bring honor upon itself by emphasizing the monarchical prerogative of its head.

37. Galatians 1:18.

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Bishop de Sura is not content with generalities; he presses onward, and he will not stop until he has given the Church a constitution like that of Great Britain, minus the House of Commons. To this end he busies himself with digging up from the acts of the Council of Constance a decree, by virtue of which the pope will be obliged to hold an ecumenical council every ten years. I shall ask Bishop de Sura whether the attempt to put this measure into effect – which, in terms of actual councils, has thus far only produced the one at Basel, with its unprecedented scandals – was auspicious for the Church, and whether such an experiment is not likely to discredit this supposed legislation? Since the Council of Trent, apart from a few rare and non-recurring exceptions, has anyone heard the college of bishops complain that decades were passing without a council being convened? We repeat: councils are facts, and not a matter of law, much less a necessity. The popes have held them when they deemed them useful and, above all, when they were able to. Has Bishop de Sura perhaps forgotten that they made every effort to bring the Council of Trent to a happy end and that they were only able to conclude it after eighteen years? It was necessary then to reckon with governments – not to mention the obstacles set up by Charles V – and Bishop de Sura knows as well as I that France did not decide to offer its cooperation and the presence of its bishops until the council (which held twenty-five sessions all told) had already reached the twenty-third.

Bishop de Sura is convinced that, if what he calls *la décennalité conciliaire* [the rule of holding councils every ten years] had been carried out faithfully, the greatest evils and the greatest misfortunes to befall the Christian community could have been avoided. I fear that he is plumping his

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own views a little too much, at the risk of contradicting himself; for at the same time he seems to have some idea of the insurmountable obstacles that the implementation of this rule would have encountered on the part of temporal governments. This gives us cause to think that God had not suggested it, and that it is simply one of many adaptations of the system of constitutional order with which the Assembly of Constance was taken. This council had only one reason for its existence, that of providing for the end of the schism; that being accomplished, its mission was completed, and the regulations that it ambitiously attempted to make could very well have never figured in the plans of divine Providence. It is understandable that Martin V and Eugene IV, for the sake of peace, spoke and acted in conformity with the decree in question; but they could not bind their successors, whose God-given power is exempt and free of any yoke that Jesus Christ has not imposed. Therefore, in order to have a true idea of the Church and of the form that was given to her, one must always have recourse solely to her divine institution. The capricious notions of man and the ferment of his passions, which are expressed in what is called the social movement – what do they matter? The Church cannot change herself, nor be changed. Like her heavenly Founder, she was yesterday, she is today, she shall be for all ages: *heri, et hodie, et in saecula* [Hebrews 13:8].

That some men who are not illuminated by the light of Faith should judge the Church as though it were a human society is perfectly natural; but one wonders whether one is dreaming when one hears a prelate appeal to *liberalism* to support the utopian scheme which he claims must henceforth guide the steps of the Church. “This *liberal* spirit which tempers mistrust and calms fears,” he tells us, “is manifested also



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in the world by this great movement, by this irresistible movement which persuades the peoples to regulate power and to help contain it by deliberative assemblies.”<sup>38</sup> And Bishop de Sura does not notice that he is reducing the Church of Jesus Christ to the level of human societies, by seeking thus in contemporary politics the reason for changes which he proposes to make this divine masterpiece undergo. Let the children of the Catholic Church not fear, however; God is vigilant, and such views will not be put into practice. Bishop de Sura can protest as much as he wants against what he calls the *absolute monarchy* of the pope; the Council of Florence has defined, as a doctrine to be held by [divine] faith, that the pope possesses the *full power* to govern the entire Church; this word shall not pass away [cf. Mark 13:31].

In his book, Bishop de Sura has had the satisfaction of evaluating Joseph de Maistre. To hear him tell it, this writer, this journalist, this philosopher was not that great, when you come down to it, and the time has arrived to do away with his undeserved reputation. Since Joseph de Maistre does not rank with the Fathers of the Church, any more than Bossuet does, I will refrain from seeing any injury in the attack directed against him. There is no man so great that he has not had his detractors, and that one can defend himself all alone. I will limit my remarks to pointing out the passage in which Bishop de Sura claims superiority over this formidable adversary, because he had no foreboding about the invention of locomotives and steamboats. Joseph de Maistre had the misfortune of saying: “The modern world is too big for councils.” One can guess the lesson that is then taught on this subject<sup>39</sup> to the author of the classic book, *Du Pape* [On the Pope]. One point, however, remains to be clarified. When Pius IX resolved to convene an

38. Tome II, page 406.

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ecumenical council, would he not have been encouraged by this consideration, that the means of transportation and of communication made the gathering of the bishops more feasible, in a word, because the world has become smaller through the general use of these marvelous means? If that was the case, I would almost dare to defend Joseph de Maistre against his aristarch [= hypercritical opponent].

The lion is dead: you can say whatever you want as you confront his hide; but if he were alive, Bishop de Sura might well hear him demand an accounting for this assertion, that if the decennial councils had continued until the seventeenth century, “the Declaration of 1682 would not have been possible, because it would not have had any *raison d’être* [reason for being].”<sup>40</sup> Joseph de Maistre would have wanted a more thorough explanation of how that Declaration, rescinded and annulled by Innocent XI, Alexander VIII and Pius VI, could have had a *raison d’être*. No doubt the reason is because the role that decennial councils would have assigned to the Roman Pontiff would be the equivalent of that which the bishops of the Assembly of 1682 had prepared for him, and it would have been unnecessary henceforth for a gathering of the clergy from one of the ecclesiastical provinces to take the trouble to regulate and limit the power of the Apostolic See. Joseph de Maistre would have said something similar in his own way; but, once again, the lion is dead; he lives no longer except in his immortal writings; but there he still frightens error and gladdens those who love the truth. Joseph de Maistre, being only a man, could err like any man; but we are certain that he cannot err when he places his genius at the service of the Faith.

39. *Ibid.*

40. Tome II, page 401.

## **Seventh Objection**

### **to the book by His Excellency, Bishop de Sura**

*The spirit [tenor] of the book seems to be directly  
opposed to one of the truths of the Faith.*

The reader who will have followed Bishop de Sura along the entire course of his two volumes, if he has no previous convictions, will remain persuaded that the power of the pope, to which the author, I acknowledge, constantly attributes the quality of monarchy, is in the final analysis only an instrument which the body of the Church uses to its advantage in the various needs or opportunities that may be encountered.

According to Bishop de Sura, the pope is superior to each particular church, but he is inferior to the aggregate of particular churches, whether it be in a council or outside of a council. Reconcile that, if you can, with the decree of Florence, which teaches that the pope has received from Jesus Christ the *full power* to govern *the universal Church*.

In a council, the agreement of the great majority of the bishops decides irrefutably the question that has been posed, on the condition that the pope shall join his assent to the decision which has been formulated; but if he refuses this assent, the council has the right to judge him, to condemn him, and even to depose him.<sup>41</sup>

41. Here are the words of Bishop de Sura; it is necessary to have read them:

“No doubt the council will pay the greatest possible deference to the opinions, the desires, and the teachings of its head. But since this head is not the absolute master of the council, cannot authoritatively impose upon it either his wishes nor his judgments, and must not impair in any way the liberty of the council, this head, we say,

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Outside of a council, the pope has the right to publish, as often as he deems appropriate, decrees on matters of doctrine; yet even though in his Bull he demands the submission of all the members of the Church and declares those who oppose it to be heretics and excommunicates, his decision only acquires validity through the assent, explicit or tacit, of the bishops dispersed in the various churches of the world. In a word the pope is the reporter of the cause, and if his report is approved by the judges, it becomes a decision.

This system, one must admit, has certain disadvantages, among which must be counted that of leaving Christianity in uncertainty for a long time about the Faith that, nevertheless, is the vital principle of the Church; after all, one does not always have a general council ready and available; and by the time a century or two has passed, the error will have had time to take deep root.

Bishop de Sura will reply to me that the pope has a sure means of putting an end to a situation so perilous for the Church. Let the pope publish a doctrinal Constitution, and the bishops of the entire world will judge it. Then, either they will publish their judgment in conformity with it, or else they will remain silent: and from that moment the decision is made. The pope has the right to issue his decree, just as the bishops have the right to judge it. Such is, according

cannot separate himself at all from the great majority of the bishops; and he will have to pronounce his decisions according to the votes of this great majority, in all questions that may concern faith, the suppression of schisms, or the reform of the Church. We will not examine at length here what would happen in the case where the pope would obstinately refuse to confirm the decisions of this great majority, and where this refusal would give birth to a serious conflict that would be perilous for the Faith and for the Church. If all the means of conciliation and procrastination were rendered useless, the pope would be exposed to the rigor of canonical punishments. By the terms of the decrees of Constance, he could be deposed, and another [pope] could be elected immediately.” – Tome I, page 424.

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to Bishop de Sura, the method of reconciling the monarchical principle and the aristocratic principle in the Church.

Bishop de Sura forgets just one thing. That is, to tell us what will become of the learning Church [as opposed to the teaching Church] while waiting for a judgment which is so far from expeditious. It is a question here of something like two hundred million individuals who form one and the same body by the bond of faith, and who for that reason are designated by the name of *the faithful*. I know that the world is no longer as large as it was at the time of Joseph de Maistre, thanks to the ease of travel from one hemisphere to the other which has been made possible by the use of steam; but the objection remains, nonetheless, in all its force for the eighteen centuries which preceded the invention of railways, steamboats and telegraph lines.

Let us suppose that the judgment of the bishops is in conformity with the papal decision. It is still necessary for the Christian world to learn of it, in order for people to know that the decision has been made. If the bishops have publicized their judgments, it becomes, for the faithful Catholic, a matter of compiling statistics about the Episcopate on the five continents of the world, then of determining the nature of the episcopal judgments rendered in the various latitudes. Until he knows the result, the faithful Catholic will keep his Faith in suspense; for it is not permissible for him to adhere by faith to the apostolic Constitution that he has in his possession, seeing that the pope who issued it is fallible and might have incorporated error into the text. As the reports come in, the unknown result becomes clear bit by bit. Sometimes the news favors the acceptance of the Bull, but then sometimes one learns that this bishop hesitates, that another is in opposition.

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Where will it end? The faithful Catholic has no other recourse but to wait, and when I say the faithful Catholic, I should say the Church; for it is the Church herself that this fine system keeps in suspense this way about the matter that interests her the most: revealed truth and the Faith.

And if the judgment must take place by means of silence? I ask the reader's pardon for putting in plain view the shabbiness of the Gallican system. It is necessary, however, to pursue it through all the devices to which it has recourse in order to diminish and belittle the Church, which is so divine and so great. If, I say, this judgment, which will turn the pontifical report into a decree that binds in faith, must be rendered by means of silence, the difficulty for the faithful Catholic will be no less. His eye fixed on statistics about the episcopate, his ear attentive, he waits, and no news comes. Silence throughout Christendom. Is this a silence of acceptance? Might it not be a dumbfounded silence, a silence in preparation for a formidable opposition? How many years must one wait in order for this negative element to be transformed into the incontestable acquiescence that gives validity to a papal Constitution? It is difficult, even for a Gallican, to answer this question.

Let us conclude, meanwhile, that if infallible doctrinal definitions are of prime importance for the Church, she is reduced to dire straits when it is a question of providing her with them. The Gospel told us that the Faith of Peter cannot fail, that it is his duty to confirm his brethren [Luke 22:32]. The Church, including the brethren of Peter, had only to listen to Peter and everything was at peace. Now that they claim that Peter is confirmed by his brethren, that he is only a monarchical instrument employed by an aristocracy which has all the characteristics of sovereignty, we must

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suffer the consequences. Fortunately, these aberrations which have persisted all too long, but which have not extended beyond a certain national boundary, have had their day. Today, when the pontiff speaks from his lofty throne, there is only one cry, that of Saint Augustine and the bishops of Africa, that of the French bishops of 1653: "The case is closed, may the error likewise come to an end!"

But let us return again to the Gallican system and gather the fruits thereof. You recall the commotion that the Jansenists made, when the bull *Unigenitus* arrived so opportunely to separate the tares from the wheat. The sect which, since 1682, no longer had to reckon with the infallibility of the pope, took refuge in an appeal to a future council. When anyone spoke to the sectarians about the Church throughout the world which had accepted the Bull, they denied at first that such was the case. It was absolutely necessary to gain time so as to be prepared to prove the acceptance with facts. Finally, eight years after the publication of the Bull by the Assembly of the clergy in the year 1714, the Court, which was favorably disposed, placed at the service of the orthodox faith its diplomatic means (which, to my knowledge, are not available to every private person), affording certainty in the matter, and one could then declare that the Constitution *Unigenitus* was accepted by all the bishops of the world, with the exception of four recalcitrant prelates and some bishops of the Little Church of Utrecht. Does the reader believe, by any chance, that the Jansenists admitted that they were defeated? Far from it; they had their reply all ready, and it was not badly contrived: "The doctrinal decisions of the pope are only infallible inasmuch as they are accepted by the bishops by way of judgment. Now, all the bishops of the world (apart from those of France) are convinced of the

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infallibility of the pope, and so when they find themselves confronted with an apostolic Constitution, they abstain from making a judgment and are content to submit to it. Nothing remains, therefore, at bottom except the Constitution, with no provisions for its infallibility, and in order to find out the truth we have no other recourse except to appeal and to appeal again to the future council.”

It was not easy for the French bishops to reply to this argument of the appellants, without taking a step toward the doctrine of the personal infallibility of the pope, and this is what took place; for ultimately it was better to renounce some of the maxims that led logically to such excesses, than to allow the Faith to be endangered. A doctor of the University of Turin, Amadeo Soardi, had the idea of collecting into a body of doctrine these precious concessions to the Roman maxims made by the bishops of France during the eighteenth century in their letters of *mandamus* prohibiting the Bull *Unigenitus*, and he published the results of his research in a work which he entitled: *De suprema Romani Pontificis autoritate hodierna Ecclesiae gallicanae doctrina* [“The present Gallican doctrine concerning the supreme authority of the Roman Pontiff”].

The interior submission of the mind is, therefore, strictly required of every believer, from the moment that an apostolic decree addressed to all the churches has been proclaimed. Any system that recognizes the infallible character of this decree only as coming from the assent of the bishops overturns the entire economy of the Catholic Church. We have just seen the ruinous consequences of such a system; but I must also point out the risks run by those who reduce the role of the pope to that of a mere minister responsible for the Church. Here is what Bishop de Sura says: “The pope pos-



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sesses the great privilege of infallibility only insofar as he teaches with the concurrence of the episcopate, whether antecedent, concomitant or subsequent, only insofar as he is the *acknowledged* organ of the Church.”<sup>42</sup>

I will refrain from disputing with Bishop de Sura about this very logical inference that he draws from the contents of his entire book; but in this pope who has become the *organ* of the Church, an *organ* that the Church can *acknowledge* or not *acknowledge*, depending upon whether or not the episcopacy precedes, accompanies, or follows him, I acknowledge that I no longer recognize Peter, the foundation of the Church: Peter, whose faith cannot fail, not because of the concurrence of his brethren, but because Jesus Christ has prayed that it might never be lacking; Peter, from whom his brethren must derive their firmness; Peter, the pastor of the sheep as well as the lambs. I see no more than a minister adorned with magnificent titles, but a mere minister. So then I ask myself whether this description of an *organ of the Church* might not reproduce in equivalent terms the designation of *ministerial head of the Church*, which no Catholic can affirm after the formidable note [of condemnation] which has been imposed upon it.<sup>43</sup>

Too often other authors in recent times have allowed an ill-sounding expression to slip by, the use of which on their part shows how rare clear and definite ideas are becoming today. One reads here and there that the pope is the representative of the Church, that it is in the name of the Church that he does this or that he teaches that. Such manners of speaking are not sound, and they correspond to a mental error. The pope is not at all dependent upon the Church, just

42. Tome II, page 374.

43. The Bull, *Auctorem fidei*.

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as Peter is not dependent upon the apostles. The pope takes the place of Jesus Christ, just as the bishops take the place of the apostles. There is no possible confusion, when one is willing to take account of the true constitution of the Church. It is not a question of knowing whether our century has a liking for or an aversion to monarchy in the temporal order. It is important to know one thing only: did Christ found His Church upon one or upon many? Let human beings give themselves the form of government that pleases them the best. We, children of the Catholic Church, have only to accept, in the spiritual order, the form that Christ established to last until the end of the ages.

## **Eighth Objection**

### **to the book by His Excellency, Bishop de Sura**

*The author contradicts himself more  
than once in the course of his book.*

Bishop de Sura placed himself in a difficult position when he set about writing a book in which he intended to maintain the strict requirements of orthodoxy and at the same time to leave the field wide open to systems that battle against that very orthodoxy. He thereby ran the risk of falling into contradictions, and this misfortune has occurred to him more than once.

Thus, when it is a matter of defining the rank and the authority of the Roman Pontiff, the terms that he uses are the same as those of the doctors with the greatest zeal for the honor of the chair of Saint Peter; but the moment that he starts to enunciate his personal theories concerning the exercise of the rights which, as he has recognized, belong to the pope, the first idea vanishes to make room for one that is diametrically opposed to it. I do not know whether I am mistaken, but I call that a contradiction.

Is it not likewise contradictory to claim that the pope is personally, and by the institution of Jesus Christ, the Doctor of all Christians, and that controversies in matters of faith *must be decided by his judgment* (Bishop de Sura admits these truths of faith declared by the councils of Florence and Lyons), and then to pretend that papal definitions are valid only inasmuch as the episcopate has judged and approved them? In this way of understanding things, it is

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evident that the pope is no longer the Doctor of all Christians; he is taught. Controversies about the Faith are no longer decided by his judgment; it is to those who judge him – him, the pope – that the right of definition belongs. Short of maintaining the identity of two contrary things, it seems to me that everyone with common sense cannot help but see here a very real contradiction.

In the same way Bishop de Sura professes in the most formal terms that the pope is, by divine right, the Pastor of the entire Church, and consequently the pastor of the bishops as well as of the lay faithful; he agrees, in keeping with the Council of Florence, that the pope has received from Jesus Christ the power to rule and govern the universal Church; then he turns around and tells us that the papal authority is superior only to the particular churches but that, in a council, the pope is bound to follow the opinion of the majority, under penalty of seeing himself judged and deposed; and this not only in the case where he had personally fallen into heresy (in which case he would no longer be pope\*), but in any case whatsoever, the moment that he failed to hold the view of the majority of the bishops. If the council represents the universal Church, and so it does, and since the pope, according to the decree of Florence, is superior to the universal Church, that is, to the body of the Church, with respect to which he represents Jesus Christ in the capacity of *Vicar*, how can one say without contradicting oneself that he must obey this body of the Church which, as our faith teaches, is subject to him and must be governed by him?

\* Editor's Note:

We might add that even if a pope were to hold erroneous or heretical views, no Council or lower authority, such as a bishop, priest, or cardinal could legally judge the pope or depose him, and also, of course, he could never define any of his personal heretical beliefs as we know from Faith and history.

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There is no use quoting the decrees of Constance. If these decrees are meant only for a time of schism, then they do not contradict the Council of Florence. If someone wants to apply them at all times, then they are its negation and must be rejected. To want to admit them, in the latter case, concurrently with the definitions of Lyons and of Florence is to accept a contradiction. I am aware that the second article of the Declaration of 1682 recognizes the Council of Constance as ecumenical in its fourth and fifth sessions, during which the decrees in question were passed; but everyone knows that their authority is null and void in the eyes of Rome and of almost all Catholic theologians. The Declaration of 1682, rescinded and annulled by three popes, *has departed*.<sup>44</sup> It is no more than a sad page in history, and nobody, in the Church, will be corrected for saying that the Council of Constance does not have the right to be numbered among the ecumenical councils.

Another Gallican contradiction into which Bishop de Sura has fallen is this. A believer admits, because he is Catholic, that the teaching Church is composed of the pope and of the bishops united to the pope; as a Gallican, one supposes a situation in which, with respect to a doctrinal definition, in a council or outside of a council, the pope would be on one side and the bishops on the other, and in this case one claims to see the Church on the side of the bishops separated from their head. This is self-contradictory, since one admits otherwise that the Church is the Church only through the union of the episcopal college with the pope. In the terms of the Gallican hypothesis, the Church would quite simply have ceased to be. Now, since the Church is immortal, the situation supposed by the Gallican theologian has never

44. *Abeat quo libuerit*. ["Let the Declaration depart whithersoever it will."]

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existed and never will exist. Until the consummation of the world, the episcopal college will adhere to the teachings of its head, whose faith cannot fail, and if this head, in a council, makes a definition of Faith simultaneously with his brothers in the sacramental character [of the fullness of Holy Orders], it is not from them that he derives his infallibility. He possesses it by virtue of the promise made personally by Jesus Christ to Peter, a promise which extends to the whole succession of Roman Pontiffs.

Still another contradiction into which Bishop de Sura has fallen is when he tries to explain in what sense the pope could be infallible *ex cathedra*. For that to take place, according to him, it is necessary for the two elements of infallibility to unite: the monarchical element and the aristocratic element. In the pursuit of this union, the aristocratic body must not defer to the pope, but rather must render its decision only after having judged the pontifical definition and found it in conformity with the Faith. For his part, the pope is stricken with impotence to the extent that his decretal does not have their concurrence, whether antecedent, concomitant, or subsequent. It is while relying on this system that Bishop de Sura assures us that being infallible depends on the pope alone. Let him have recourse to the antecedent, concomitant, or subsequent element, let him comply with docility to the opinion of the larger number of his brothers, and let him make that view his own; from that moment on, behold, he is infallible. The contradiction in that arrangement lies in the idea that the pope is no longer infallible *ex cathedra*, but rather *ex cathedris*, since his fallible See, or chair, only attains inerrancy through its union with the other chairs, since it submits to them a proposal for a decree, which is then returned bearing their certification and henceforth infallible.

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Bishop de Sura had said: "We must never assimilate spiritual society to political society. Let us accept national sovereignty in the political order, but refuse to recognize it in the religious order. Let us remain nineteenth-century Frenchmen, and let us be faithful to the great principle of national sovereignty; but in the religious order, we should not recognize any other authority than that which Jesus Christ has established."<sup>45</sup> These words seemed to promise that the author, in pursuing his purpose of averting a definition by the council which to him might not seem opportune, would have refrained from making an appeal to the political prejudices of his time. We saw a moment ago that he fell into this other contradiction when he seeks to arouse liberal passions against a definition which, if it were passed, would place in a more striking light a prerogative of the pope which has in fact been recognized at all times in the Church, but would add nothing to the idea of the pontifical monarchy, such as it has been determined by the Council of Florence. The populations today no longer want an independent monarchy, but what does that matter to us, who know that the power of the Pastor of all Christians is a *full power to govern the universal Church*, a power that emanates directly from Jesus Christ and which can be neither diminished nor changed by human will?

Bishop de Sura's manner of proceeding is no more certain when he deals with the transmission of episcopal jurisdiction. It goes without saying that the prelate does not admit that the sole source of this jurisdiction upon earth is found in the Roman Pontiff. His view is (and would have to be) that the bishops receive their jurisdiction immediately from Jesus Christ Himself. Nevertheless, one must admit, Bishop de

45. Tome I, page 60.

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Sura professes the apostolic origin of the three great patriarchal sees of Rome: Alexandria and Antioch. He recognizes that the authority to install other bishops, which is vested in the bishops of Alexandria and of Antioch, for the entire extent of their jurisdiction, derived from the See of Rome, according to Saint Peter's authority (as is taught by Saint Leo, Saint Gelasius, Saint Gregory the Great and Saint Nicholas I). I only regret that the author forgets to say that each new Patriarch of these two sees had to receive his authority to install bishops and confirmation from the Roman Pontiff and thus take from its source the jurisdiction that he would have to transmit to the bishops of his ecclesiastical territory – the Roman Pontiff being the sole bishop who acquires his power by the mere fact of his canonical election.

It happened that the three patriarchal sees comprised almost the totality of the Church in the early centuries, and so it followed that episcopal jurisdiction emanated from Saint Peter's power of appointment for an immense number of sees. Bishop de Sura agrees with this, but in his system he still had to find at least a few bishops who were legitimately established without being at all dependent on the pope. He thinks that he has discovered them in the three metropolitan sees of Asia Minor, Pontus and Thrace, which are known by the name of Exarchates. These churches in fact were not dependent upon the patriarchate of Antioch and even less so upon that of Alexandria; on the other hand, they did not belong to the patriarchate of the West. Hence we find there, says Bishop de Sura, "numerous perfectly legitimate bishops who nevertheless had not received their appointment [*institution*], either directly or indirectly, from the Holy See."<sup>46</sup>

46. Tome II, page 13.



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This is claiming victory a bit prematurely. The learned Schelstrate, guardian of the Vatican Library, has thoroughly explained in his *Antiquitas Ecclesiae illustrata* [Illustrated Ancient History of the Church] this question of the exarchates, which Thomassin, the only scholarly authority cited by Bishop de Sura, has left in a haze, along with many others. The organization of the Church took place at first according to the districts of the Roman Empire, which supernatural providence had predestined to serve as her base. Now, almost the entire empire had been divided into three vast sections: that of Rome, that of Alexandria and that of Antioch, each of which had a Prefect of the Praetorian Guard placed in charge of its administration. The three provinces of Asia, Pontus and Thrace were ruled by proconsuls designated by the name of Exarchs.

Bishop de Sura agrees that Saint Peter erected the churches of Rome, Alexandria and Antioch as the principal Churches, naturally placing the latter two in subordination to the first, but giving to their metropolitans, known later by the name of Patriarchs, the power to appoint bishops throughout the extent of their jurisdiction. It is unnecessary to add that the Patriarchs, depositaries of such an immense power, only had the right to exercise it after they had been confirmed by the pope, to whom Saint Peter had reserved the direct Patriarchate of the West, which comprised Italy, Gaul, Spain, the province of Africa, Great Britain, Germany, etc.

Bishop de Sura delights in thinking that the metropolitans of Ephesus, Caesarea and Heraclea, located outside of the three Patriarchates, were in no way dependent upon Saint Peter, and that the three bishops of these three districts did not receive, as he puts it, their appointment from the

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Holy See either *directly* or *indirectly*. He triumphantly displays them as having been instituted by Jesus Christ Himself without intermediaries; and this alleged fact alone seems to him conclusive enough to ground his system solidly. "There was in the Church," he tells us, "a power of episcopal appointment which was distinct from that of the Apostolic See and which took its place alongside it."<sup>47</sup>

But what tops everything is the idea that he puts forth to explain the independence of these tiny patriarchates with regard to any sort of appointment by the See of Rome. According to him, the Churches of Ephesus, Heraclea, Caesarea, and even that of Cyprus, were of apostolic foundation; such is, to his way of thinking, the origin of their jurisdictional rights. Therefore, he tells us, the Church of Ephesus was founded by Saint John; that of Heraclea, according to a well-attested tradition, would have had as its founder Saint Andrew; the origin of the one in Caesarea would be more obscure; finally, the one in Cyprus can be traced back to Saint Barnabas.<sup>48</sup> This way of seeing things could lead the author further than he would like. Surely nothing is more glorious for a church than to have an apostle as its founder; but must we draw the conclusion that this church, if the apostle in question is not Saint Peter himself, will necessarily and perpetually have a special place of its own in the hierarchy? That would be the equivalent of saying that the personal jurisdiction of the apostles, which extended to the whole world but would become extinct with them, still continued today apart from the Apostolic See of Rome. This conclusion in and of itself demonstrates how dangerous and false the premise is.

47. Tome II, page 31.

48. Tome II, pages 28-29.

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Descending to particulars, we willingly concede to Bishop de Sura that the Church of Ephesus was founded by Saint John and that of Heraclea by Saint Andrew. As for Caesarea, there is not the slightest trace of apostolic origin in its beginnings; Bishop de Sura admits it. With regard to the Church of Cyprus, one may grant that it had Saint Barnabas as its founder; but what conclusion can be drawn from that? Saint Barnabas was not one of the apostles. He was simply a companion of Saint Paul. Hence there is no reason to build a serious system upon such a fragile foundation.

What was the origin of the exemption of the three churches of Ephesus, Caesarea, and Heraclea, *vis-à-vis* the patriarchate of Antioch, when it came to the appointment of bishops? We lack documents which could determine the answer in a precise way; but what can be affirmed is that Saint Peter cannot have been a stranger to it. He alone could have exempted these churches from dependence upon the patriarchate, probably for the purpose of imitating the civil organization of the empire in the exarchates, just as he had imitated it in conferring such vast provinces upon the two sees of Alexandria and Antioch. Then too, we see that, after the legates to the Council of Chalcedon had departed and the bishops of the council drew up the famous canon in favor of the See of Constantinople, those bishops requested of Pope Saint Leo for the new patriarch the power to appoint the metropolitans for these three churches from then on. Was this not admitting altogether that the pope is the source of all jurisdiction, and that the privilege of exemption enjoyed by the exarchates came from the See of Saint Peter?

At the same time I will make an observation: in the long passage of Bishop de Sura to which I allude here, when the author speaks of the canons of Nicea and Ephesus which

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mention and recognize the rights of the Patriarchs and of the Exarchs, he seems to want to attribute to these two councils an authority distinct from that of the pope in this matter. This would be yet another illusion. The authority of the ecumenical council, if it is conducted according to the rules, is not at all isolated from that of the Roman Pontiff who acts in it and with it, and one cannot divide one of these two elements from the other, since they constitute only one. Otherwise the pope would always remain the pope, but the council would no longer be the council.

I end this digression – which to me seemed necessary in order to respond to the difficulties which Bishop de Sura sets forth with the purpose of challenging the qualification of the Roman Pontiff as the unique source of episcopal jurisdiction – by insisting again upon this fundamental fact: that if the Patriarchs gave the canonical mission [*institution*] to the bishops in their jurisdiction, it was on the condition of having received it themselves from the pope when they took possession of their sees. Bishop de Sura will find the evidence for this in the learned tome of M. Jean de la Mennais entitled: *Tradition de l'Église sur l'institution des évêques* [The Tradition of the Church concerning the Appointment of Bishops], a monumental work of erudition and also of priestly courage, which dates back to the era of the First Empire [in France], when Gallican doctrines, triumphing in the council of Paris in 1811, put the Church of France at such great risk.<sup>49</sup>

Thus, if the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch could exercise the important prerogative which Saint Peter had

49. No one is unaware of the fact that only fourteen bishops out of ninety-five maintained that the right of {institution} vested in the pope is inherent in the office of Supreme Pontiff.

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conferred upon their sees only on the condition of their having been previously appointed by the Roman Pontiff, by means of those letters which were not simply letters of *communion*, but letters of *confirmation* (and Bishop de Sura can find the evidence for this in the erudite research of M. Jean de la Mennais); could these humble exarchs of Pontus, Thrace and Asia, then, be exempt from this indispensable condition to which the great archbishops of Alexandria and Antioch were subject, as well as the archbishop of Constantinople at a later date? Bishop de Sura, I must say, ends up agreeing that the three metropolitans, for whom he shows such an astonishing predilection, could very well in fact have been somewhat dependent upon the pope. It is for this reason that I have thought it necessary to introduce this topic in the present chapter, which has as its subject the contradictions into which the author has been drawn.

Thus, after going into raptures at the thought of these three metropolitans who, according to him at first, received no canonical mission [*institution*] from the pope, neither *immediately* nor *indirectly*, Bishop de Sura concludes by agreeing that the Roman Pontiff “confirmed the new prelate in the possession of his title”.<sup>50</sup> That was certainly going to a lot of trouble, to embroil such a simple matter, only to agree ultimately that the pope *confirmed* the exarchs as well as the patriarchs, and that he confirmed them, not indirectly, but in an immediate manner. This concession brings to naught a great number of pages from the second volume of his work, and it is true that the author seeks to attenuate it a bit, in making the *apostolic confirmation* consist of the pope’s *acceptance* of the *letters of communion* of the new metropolitan, whereas the *refusal* of these letters would

50. Tome II, page 31.

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have been equivalent to a denial of canonical mission. This subtlety is inadmissible, even less so since Bishop de Sura has the loyalty to quote on the same page the letter in which Pope Saint Boniface I relates how Theodosius requested of Saint Damasus, on behalf of Nectarius who had just been elevated to the see of Constantinople, the *formal letter* which would *give validity* to his episcopacy, *quae ejus sacerdotium roboraret*.<sup>51</sup> There could be no better proof that the appointment of the great prelates of the East by the pope took place, not by the acceptance of their letters of communion, but by a direct act on the part of the Apostolic See, an act which conferred validity, robur, to the jurisdiction of the prelate who had been appointed.

51. Doubtless there is no need to say that, in antiquity, the word *sacerdos* signified the bishop, and the word *sacerdotium*, the episcopate. Many individuals today, however, seem to have forgotten this, to judge by the translations that are published here and there.

## **Ninth Objection**

### **to the book by His Excellency, Bishop de Sura**

*The author is not always precise in stating historical facts.*

I have no intention whatsoever of noting here all the places in the book by Bishop de Sura in which, it seems to me, he is on the wrong track concerning the facts that he adduces. I will limit myself to a few points, and I will begin with the passages of his book where he gives an account of the institution of the hierarchy in the Gospel.

Bishop de Sura combines in one and the same series the Gospel texts in which Jesus Christ assigns to Saint Peter his personal prerogatives and those wherein he confers upon the apostles their divine powers. He adds afterward a few lines from Saint Paul on the Church and its sacred privileges, and he refers to this set of quotations by the rather improper name of *Constitutional Charter of the Church*.<sup>52</sup> After this exposition, he invites his reader to notice “that one part of the *sovereign powers* is extended to the other apostles.” Elsewhere he says: “The Savior, no doubt, did not revoke the particular privileges that He had already bestowed upon Peter alone; but when He extended to the assembly of the apostles the *sovereign powers*, the *sovereign promises*, He declared, in a manner that is quite evident, His intention to found

52. Tome I, page 136.

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a *sovereign body* subject to one head.”<sup>53</sup> And in yet another place: “If the Lord had wanted to give to Peter an absolute and indivisible *sovereignty*, would He have extended a part of the *sovereign powers* to the other apostles? Would He have given to the other apostles, united with Peter and under his primacy, *the powers that He had bestowed upon Peter*? Would He have employed, in granting these privileges, the *same words* that He had addressed to Peter?”<sup>54</sup>

When confronted with the facts of the Gospel, these assertions – despite the cautious language – do not hold up. Jesus Christ did not confer upon the apostles the sovereign powers that establish the monarchy of Saint Peter. He never said to the apostles: “You are Peters, and upon these rocks I will build My Church.” By no means did He say to them: “I have prayed for you all, so that your faith may not fail.” He did not say to them: “All of you will confirm your brethren.” He did not tell them: “All of you, feed My lambs and My sheep.” Had it been so, then in fact the Savior would have given the apostles a share in the gifts that He had conferred upon Peter, for the purpose of establishing His Church upon unity; but in that case He would have had as many Churches as He had apostles.

It must be acknowledged, then, that the sovereignty given to Saint Peter by the words to which I have just alluded was not communicated to the apostles, neither in its entirety nor in part; but I will readily agree with Bishop de Sura that Jesus Christ, Who said to Saint Peter: “Whatsoever thou shalt bind and loose on earth, it shall be bound and loosed in heaven” [cf. Matthew 16:19], said to His apostles

53. Tome II, page 101.

54. Tome II, page 346.



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as well: “Whatsoever you shall bind and loose on earth, shall be bound and loosed also in heaven” [cf. Matthew 18:18]. And it had to be so in this matter; but here it is not a question of the monarchy. The souls that would be loosed or bound were scattered throughout the world: they could not all have recourse to Peter. It was necessary, therefore, that this divine power of binding and loosing be placed in other hands as well, besides his. The sovereignty, on the contrary, which for Peter consists in being the unique foundation, in confirming his brethren, in feeding the whole flock – this sovereignty which was the instrument of unity – could not be communicated to others and was not in fact communicated, neither in its entirety nor in part.

To no avail, Bishop de Sura claims to see in these words addressed to all the apostles (Peter being among them): “Go, teach ye all nations; I am with you even to the consummation of the world,” an extension of Peter’s sovereignty made to his brethren the apostles. There is no question here of sovereignty; it is the mission which is given to them all, to bring the Good News to the whole world. The Lord sends whom He wills, just as He made head of His missionaries whom it pleased Him to appoint.

Bishop de Sura correctly notes that the collective unity of Peter and the other apostles forms the Church; nobody will dispute that. We do not read in the Gospel that Peter is the Church; but we do read there the texts that teach us that Peter is the Head of the Church: nothing could be easier to understand.

I regret that the respectable author, to support his thesis, has thought it necessary to borrow an argument that until now had been left to the Protestants, when they try to attack the primacy of Saint Peter. In order to deprive

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this apostle of the character of the unique *foundation* of the Church, they produce the passage from the Epistle to the Ephesians where Saint Paul says to the faithful that they are “built upon the *foundation of the Apostles*.” Bishop de Sura has recourse to this same passage when he tries to establish that the sovereignty of Peter was extended to his brethren. It is possible to give the same response, and it is quite simple. Saint Paul is speaking to the Ephesians, not about the constitution of the Church, but about divine adoption, which we attain by the Faith that is based upon the teaching given us by the apostles. It suffices to read the whole sentence: “[You have been] built upon the foundation of the Apostles *and Prophets*.” Indeed, the apostles, in their teaching, made it their business to show the unity between the doctrine of the prophets and their own. Therefore, unless Bishop de Sura wants to place the *prophets* among those who have also received an extension of the *sovereignty* of Peter, I would advise him to stop combining the passage from Saint Matthew with the one from the Epistle to the Ephesians. Just because Our Lord gave to Simon the title and the character of *Peter*, one cannot forbid Saint Paul or anyone else the freedom to make use of the word *foundation*, even when it a question of something completely distinct from the constitution of the Church.

To be sure, the Apostles are an admirable creation in the [spiritual] economy of the Church, and, consequently, so is the Episcopate which takes the place of the Apostolic College; but to glorify the Apostolic College and the Episcopate it is not necessary to confuse them with Peter, who is set apart. Likewise one must also distinguish the Apostolic College from the Episcopate in

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several essential respects. The apostles received from Jesus Christ the mission to teach all the nations; the Roman Pontiff alone has this power today. Every other bishop possesses only a jurisdiction circumscribed within the limits of the diocese. On the day of Pentecost the apostles received the personal gift of inspiration and infallibility in teaching; today, no bishop possesses infallibility, but the college of bishops united with the Roman Pontiff is infallible in faith. The apostles were inspired; the Roman Pontiff does not have the gift of inspiration, but when he teaches the Church, his teaching is divinely safeguarded from all error.

Bishop de Sura is not content to pretend in vain that the sovereignty of Peter was extended to his brethren; he pursues this Prince of the apostles, seeking to show that the Savior's prayer for him was not effective. It should have protected him in his faith, and notwithstanding this divine prayer, Peter nevertheless had a great fall in denying his Master. Bishop de Sura takes that as a point of departure in order to weaken Peter's claim to the duty of strengthening his brethren.<sup>55</sup> It is not difficult to formulate an answer. Peter's office was not to begin until after the Savior's departure. The Vicar is not needed when the one whom he must represent is still present. Thus Our Lord speaks at first in the future tense, just as He did with the Eucharist: "The bread that I will give is My flesh for the life of the world" [John 6:52]; then at the Last Supper: "Take ye and eat: this is My Body" [Matthew 26:26]. Thus He says to Peter: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I *will build* My Church" [Matthew 16:18]; therefore it was not yet built. "I *will give* to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" [Matthew

55. Tome II, page 92.

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16:19]; therefore He does not yet give them to him. “Thou, *being once converted* [*i.e. once thou art converted*], confirm thy brethren” [Luke 22:32]; this privilege, therefore, was not to be exercised until some time after the fall and the conversion of Peter. The wondrous gift of this Faith which will never fail was reserved, then, for the days when the speech of the Incarnate Word would no longer be audible to the senses. Then, too, only after His resurrection does the Savior – having established Peter’s conversion undeniably by a triple interrogation in the presence of the apostles – finally grant him possession of the promised power, by saying to him, not in the future but in the present tense: “Feed My lambs, feed My sheep” [John 21:15 ff.]. The supreme Pontificate is about to begin; until that moment it existed only in promise. Bishop de Sura, therefore, has no reason to see the fall of the pope in the fall of Peter before the passion of his Master.

Nor is he in agreement with historical truth in his manner of speaking about the assembly of the Apostles who gathered in Jerusalem with the priests of that church in order to settle the question about Mosaic observances. To hear Bishop de Sura tell it, it would seem that the Apostolic College was assembled there in its entirety, while as a matter of fact the only ones there were Saint Peter, Saint James and Saint Paul, since Saint Barnabas is called an apostle only in an improper sense. Also present were the priests of Jerusalem, and they are mentioned together with the apostles in the letter that decides the question. Does Bishop de Sura mean to say that not only the bishops, but also the members of the second degree of Holy Orders were allowed to participate in the sovereignty given to Saint Peter? He triumphantly points out that, after Saint Peter

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declared his opinion, Saint James states his own, as though the question was not yet settled.<sup>56</sup> But why should not Saint James, who was infallible in doctrine just as much as Saint Peter, render a judgment in his turn, when we see in a council the bishops, who are not infallible individually, carry out one and the same indivisible act of infallibility, by judging simultaneously with the pope who confirms them? It is not apparent what advantage the Gallican system can derive from the fact reported in the Acts of the Apostles. The Council of Jerusalem is essentially different from the ecumenical councils. The Apostolic College was not convoked, only three apostles happened to be in one place by accident, the apostles were all infallible, the decision was made in the name of the apostles and in the name of the priests. One must see in this priceless episode of apostolic history, therefore, a fact of great solemnity due to the question that was raised and decided, and due to the important terms of the decree, and one must acknowledge the working of the Holy Spirit upon the assembly of Jerusalem; but it would be impossible to extract from it a complete theory of the ecumenical council.

Saint Irenaeus, in the third book of *Adversus Haereses* [Against the Heresies], teaches, with the authority of a doctor who testifies to the Tradition of the early Church, “that every church, that is to say, the faithful everywhere, must remain united to the Roman Church because of its commanding position [*literally*: higher principality]; to this

56. Rev. Professor Döllinger, in his *Considerations proposed to the Bishops of the Council*, dares to say that “the decree of the Synod was not formulated in accordance with the vote of the prince of the Apostles, but rather according to that of Saint James.” The Book of Acts is in the hands of all readers, and everyone can verify that the two apostles held perfectly identical opinions. For what purpose was such an assertion uttered? when it is so easy to see that it vanishes like smoke at a simple reading of the text.

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Church in which the faithful everywhere have constantly preserved that tradition which comes from the apostles: *Ad hanc enim Ecclesiam propter potiolem principalitatem, necesse est omnem convenire Ecclesiam, hoc est eos qui sunt undique fideles: in qua semper ab his qui sunt undique, conservata est ea quae est ab apostolis traditio.*”

Here is the translation of the text given by Bishop de Sura: “It is necessary that every church unite itself with that one (the Roman Church), because of its principal power; that is to say, that in every place the faithful receive the Tradition which has come down and been preserved since the time of the apostles.”<sup>57</sup> Thus Saint Irenaeus teaches us that the faithful throughout the world are bound to keep the Tradition of the Faith that comes from the apostles by adhering to the Roman Church, and that through this adherence to the revered Church of the Principality they preserve everywhere the doctrine taught by the apostles. And Bishop de Sura makes the meaning of the second part of the passage disappear, by substituting there words that have no basis in the text, but which are designed to erase the phrase *in qua*, which refers to the Roman Church, so as to tell us: “*In every place* the faithful receive the Tradition which has come down and been preserved since the time of the apostles.” This text has always been very inconvenient to the Gallicans, but that is not sufficient reason to make it say something completely different from what it means.

Saint Irenaeus leads us quite naturally to the Quartodecimanians [those in the Eastern Church who celebrated Easter on the fourteenth of the Jewish month of Nisan, regardless of the day of the week that it fell on], on behalf of whom he wrote a letter to Pope Saint Victor.

57. Tome I, page 152.

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Bishop de Sura pretends that, despite the condemnation by the Apostolic See, the error of these sectarians was not considered heretical until after the Council of Nicea, which proscribed it.<sup>58</sup> The documents from this period are rare, but that is one more reason to take note of those which scholarship is discovering in our own day. Bishop de Sura is not unaware of the famous manuscript of the *Philosophoumena* brought from Mount Athos by M. Mynoïde Mynas and published by M. Miller at Oxford in 1851. If he wishes to take the trouble to consult it, he will find that at the time of the author of this text, that is, in the first half of the third century, the Quartodecimanians were numbered among the heretics. The author, in the account that he devotes to them, lists them between Hermogenes and Montanus.

The following year (1852), Dom Pitra published the opusculum by an anonymous third-century writer, entitled *De Solemnitatibus, Sabbatis et Neomeniis* [On Solemnities, Sabbaths, and New Moons], in which the author teaches that “the elect and beloved Bride of Christ, the universal Church, anathematizes those who celebrate the feast of Easter on the fourteenth of the month with the Jews, and in this she observes the Decree (*Auctoritatem*) of the Apostolic See.”<sup>59</sup>

The *case* was therefore *closed*, and closed by the authority of the Apostolic See. That the Council of Nicea should have judged it appropriate to anathematize them again is perfectly legitimate; was it not convened to anathematize solemnly the enemies of the Word’s divinity, and was not the divinity of the Word the first article of the

58. Tome II, page 109.

59. *Spicilegium Solesmense*. Tome I, page 11.

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Christian Faith, even before there was any question of convoking the Council of Nicea?

Bishop de Sura, finding himself embarrassed by the famous saying of Saint Augustine, when the holy Doctor says that *the case was closed* after Pope Saint Innocent I approved the Councils of Carthage and Mileve, resorts to an easy but not very sure way of getting rid of this formidable argument in favor of papal infallibility. He goes so far as to say: "The case was closed, because there was agreement of all the churches adhering to the decisions issued by various councils and confirmed by the Holy See."<sup>60</sup> It is enough to weigh the words employed by Saint Augustine to see quite clearly that his thought, like his manner of expression, has in view only the two councils of Africa and the confirming decretal of Saint Innocent. Does Bishop de Sura want a counter-proof? We are in a position to furnish him with one. Saint Augustine, throughout his controversial writings against the Pelagians, repeatedly cites the Roman decision as having been the complete solution. Replying to Julian, who rebuked him for quoting only authorities drawn from the Latin Church, he writes as follows: "Or do you think that they should be despised, because they are all from the Church of the West, and because we have not quoted any bishop from the East? What shall we do, then, since they are Greek, and we are Latins? I think that for you that part of the world should suffice, in which the Lord willed to crown the first of His Apostles with a most glorious martyrdom. If you had been willing to listen to blessed Innocent who presides over this Church, you would have been freed from the Pelagian snares of your youth, which is so perilous. What else could that saintly man reply to the African councils, but the doctrine which from earliest

60. Tome I, page 515.



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antiquity the Apostolic See, the Roman Church, professes uninterruptedly with the other churches?”<sup>61</sup>

It is sad to have to defend against a bishop the meaning of these splendid lines of Saint Augustine, quoted so many times to heretics who were condemned by the Holy See. Let Bishop de Sura consult the *Mandamus* letters [mandates] of the French bishops against those who opposed the Bull *Unigenitus*. He will discover how insistently they urge against these heretics the argument furnished by the text of Saint Augustine: *Causa finita est*. The reader is able to recognize, then, from the passage against Julian, that it was indeed the decision of the pope, and of the pope alone, which the bishop of Hippo cited as an irrefutable judgment in this question. We saw above the language used by Saint Innocent himself, when he replied to the Fathers of Mileve and warned them that the decision that they would make would have the force of law in all the churches. The two councils, according to the calculation of Tillemont, were held in June 416; the confirming letter of Saint Innocent is dated sometime in January 417; and the words of Saint Augustine announce the recent arrival of this response, which concludes everything. Not one word in this whole business that shows that the saintly Doctor was concerned about the consent of the episcopacy throughout the world, who could not have any knowledge

61. An ideo contemnendos putas, quia occidentalis Ecclesiae sunt omnes, nec ullus est in eis commemoratus a nobis Orientis Episcopus? Quid ergo faciemus, cum illi Graeci sint, nos Latini? Puto tibi eam partem orbis sufficere debere, in qua primum Apostolorum suorum voluit Dominus gloriosissimo martyrio coronare. Cui Ecclesiae praesidentem beatum Innocentium si audire voluisses, jam tam periculosam juventutem tuam Pelagianis laqueis exemisses. Quid enim potuit ille vir sanctus Africanis respondere conciliis, nisi quod antiquitus Apostolica Sedes et Romana cum caeteris tenet perseveranter Ecclesia? *Contra Julianum Pelagianum*, Lib. I, 13.

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so soon of the apostolic decision. All his support is in the Roman Church; the pope, in his judgments, cannot fail to express her immutable doctrine, which is infallibly the doctrine of all the other churches.

The French bishops in the eighteenth century, in response to the Jansenists who endeavored, by the argument of Bishop de Sura, to evade the consequences of the saying of Saint Augustine, which was directly applicable to the Bull *Unigenitus*, develop in their Mandamus letters the considerations that I mention here in passing. One can find the eloquent pages of these prelates gathered and published in a special collection by the Catholics of that stormy period, and especially the Mandates of Monsieur de Mailly, Archbishop of Rheims, M. de Tencin, Archbishop of Embrun, M. de Saint-Albin, Archbishop of Cambrai, M. Languet, Archbishop of Sens, M. de Belzunce, Bishop of Marseilles, M. de Fleury, then Bishop of Fréjus, etc. I am content to quote Fenelon, who has an honorable place in this precious collection: "Saint Augustine," he says, "cuts short in two words by sheer authority the complaints of the Pelagians. He says, 'They sent to the Apostolic See the acts of the two African councils on this matter. Some rescripts have arrived from Rome: the case is closed.' Nothing could be clearer, my dear brothers; far from us be all empty subtleties. Before the rescripts which came from Rome, the two councils in Africa did not conclude the matter at all; but it was concluded the moment that the rescripts had come from Rome. From that moment on, the judgment becomes infallible, final, supreme, irrevocable. Here is a precise date: the case was not closed any earlier or any later."<sup>62</sup>

Bishop de Sura's subject leads him to deal with the formula of faith that was signed by all the bishops of the East

62. *Recueil des Mandements*, page 502.

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at the time of Saint Hormisdas. We will return to this document, which is one of the most imposing claims of the infallibility of the Apostolic See; but it is impossible for me not to object, with the *Revue catholique* of Louvain,<sup>63</sup> to the way in which Bishop de Sura has translated one of the most important passages of this formulary of faith. It says there: *Sequentes in omnibus apostolicam Sedem* ["following in everything the Apostolic See"]. Bishop de Sura translates: *faithful in everything to the apostolic Faith*. Two times he copies this translation, which causes the principal meaning of the phrase concerning faith to disappear, not with regard to its apostolic origin, but as being taught infallibly by the See of Rome.<sup>64</sup> This subtraction is too serious to go without being mentioned.

Concerning the business of the Three Chapters, Bishop de Sura is not always exact either. Thus he tells us uncere- moniously, "that it is not possible to deny the condemnation of Pope Vigilius by the fifth council."<sup>65</sup> Nothing could be more legitimate, however, than to deny it, and I will prove the truth of my assertion. First of all, the fifth council was not ecumenical when it produced its decree, and the fact must be quite evident, since Bishop de Sura himself admits it when he says that "the adherence of Vigilius to the decisions of the fifth council acquired for it an authority which was entirely incontestable,"<sup>66</sup> and that "if Vigilius had not ended up accepting the fifth council, the authority of this council would have remained dubious."<sup>67</sup> Let us note first the admission that Bishop de Sura makes here concerning the

63. November 15, 1869 issue.

64. See Tome I, page 319 and Tome II, page 143.

65. Tome II, page 318. Elsewhere, Bishop de Sura says again: "The fifth general council had condemned both Pope Vigilius and his *Constitutum*." *Ibid.*, page 124.

66. Tome I, page 266.

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necessity of apostolic confirmation in order for a council to be ecumenical, and let us examine the conditions under which this assembly was held. In the first place, it certainly did not represent the universal Church. This Council of Constantinople, Bishop de Sura has said himself, “was composed of one hundred fifty-one bishops, among whom there were five Africans, the only Westerners who attended it.”<sup>68</sup> We might add that Vigilius had demanded an equal number of Latin bishops and a place where the liberty of the council would have a better guarantee than it could possibly have in the imperial city, where the Emperor Justinian intended to direct everything. I admit to being a bit astonished to see Bishop de Sura, who is so enthusiastic about what he calls, in the writings of Bossuet, *ecclesiastical liberalism* vis-à-vis the pope, make so little of it vis-à-vis the emperor. One is dumbfounded to hear him say with imperturbable composure: “These vacillations of Vigilius brought down a severe *judgment* upon him. An imperial commissioner read a decree of the emperor who, in order to punish the pope for his refusal to attend the council and for the inconstancy of his conduct in this affair, ordered that the name of Vigilius be removed from the sacred diptychs. *This enormous abuse of the imperial power did not arouse the protests of the council.* Yet in permitting Caesar’s order to be executed and while abandoning the person of the pope, it declared that it still remained united to the Apostolic See.”<sup>69</sup>

The cowardice of these bishops who allow a pope to be excommunicated by an emperor in this way (for it is well known that striking the name of a bishop from the sacred diptychs was a form of excommunication) does not make

67. *Ibid.*, page 271.

68. *Ibid.*, page 253.

69. Tome I, page 259.

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Bishop de Sura indignant. He finds it completely natural that, after the emperor got rid of the *person* of the pope, the council should take refuge in adherence to the See. Certainly, if the Roman Pontiff ever stood for liberty in the Church, one can very well say that it was in this situation – not to speak of the other forms of mistreatment that the unfortunate pope had to suffer from the imperial power during his stay in Constantinople. It is inexplicable how a bishop can put up with such indignities, or how the admirers of his book had the nerve to declare their fears concerning the liberty of the next ecumenical council, which Pius IX convoked and over which he will preside. When one sees Vigilius taking refuge in the church of Saint Peter of Constantinople, surrounded by soldiers with swords drawn and bows bent, reduced to clinging to the columns of the altar, from which he is torn away with such violence that the table would have collapsed upon him, had not the clergy of the church held it up, surrounded by the cries of the people, who at the same time saw the ministers of the altar dragged by the hair and trampled underfoot by that pack of soldiers (and I mention here only one incident), one wonders whether, at Constantinople, the liberty of the Church was all that safe. But let us move on.

I might add that the council of the one hundred fifty-one bishops was presided over neither by the pope in person nor by his legates. Vigilius unwaveringly refused to appear there. Thus: no legitimate convocation, no representation of the universal Church, no presidency by the pope, the continual influence of Caesar who did not stop short of violence: that is what historical scholarship reveals to us about this assembly which, without the subsequent approval of its decree by Vigilius, would have remained at the level of the

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least free particular councils that have ever been held. Bishop de Sura, who has taken the trouble to give us an eloquent picture of the faults committed by the popes, cannot take it amiss that we bring the same sincerity to our exposition of this episode of conciliar history.

But did the council ultimately condemn Vigilius and his *Constitutum*, as Bishop de Sura affirms? First of all one must admit that neither Vigilius nor his *Constitutum* are mentioned in the council's decree. All that one could say is that the council, in its decree, does not take into account this *Constitutum*. Vigilius thought that he had to abandon it himself six months after the conclusion of this same council. Now, what was the significance of the *Constitutum* of Vigilius? Was it a decree whereby this pope may have declared himself in favor of the doctrine of the Three Chapters and professed a faith different from that which the council taught? No, the pope and the council thought the same way. It is just that Vigilius, whose personal character is not at issue here (besides, that belongs to history), after having condemned the Three Chapters by an initial judgment, was frightened by the trouble that this condemnation caused in a great number of churches in the East, as a result of a misunderstanding, and he had thought it necessary to impose silence in this matter. Such is the intent of his *Constitutum*.

What did the council do? Since it was in a position to know, on the contrary, the urgent need of the Oriental churches for a doctrinal judgment on these three writings that were filled with bad doctrine, the council took it upon itself to condemn them, despite Vigilius' refusal to cooperate. As for the judgment that it passed, this pertained only to those who thereafter would dare to defend the Three Chapters, which were infected with the Nestorian heresy,

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and to teach or write against the council's decision. Now Vigilius disapproved of this doctrine in itself, even though he judged it inopportune to fulminate against the three writings by means of which some wanted to revive it. He may have been mistaken in this prudential question, and later he recognized its true significance; but the Fathers of the council of Constantinople did not bring upon themselves the ridicule and the odium of condemning a pope by its decree, as Bishop de Sura so astoundingly affirms. There was no reason for a condemnation; and had they issued one, we can be sure that they would at least have gone to the trouble of saying so. Thus collapses the edifice which Bishop de Sura has constructed at such great expense; and it may even be permissible to congratulate him on it; for it is a rule of logic that he who proves too much proves nothing. What is in fact his purpose throughout his book? To establish that the ecumenical council is above the pope. Now if the Second Council of Constantinople, which had no ecumenical qualities besides the subsequent confirmation of the pope, was nevertheless above the pope, it would follow that every assembly of bishops is in a position to dictate law to the Vicar of Jesus Christ. We quite willingly do Bishop de Sura the honor of believing that he rejects such a conclusion.

But here we have now a rather embarrassing question of fact. The author of one of the Three Chapters is Ibas, Bishop of Edessa, writing to the priest Maris, and this letter is full of the Nestorian error. In his *Constitutum*, in which he sets forth with great fidelity the Faith of the Church, Vigilius had intended to save this Bishop Ibas from the anathema by recalling that, at the Council of Chalcedon, the Fathers had received his profession of the orthodox Faith together with a recantation of the errors into which he had fallen, and they had re-installed

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him in his see. Bishop de Sura takes the liberty of accusing Vigilius of having approved, pure and simple, in his *Constitutum*, the letter that Bishop Ibas himself had retracted. “Instead of condemning him,” he says, “Vigilius, by a factual error, declares that this letter was approved by the Council of Chalcedon, and taking responsibility for this letter by this new judgment, tolerating the expressions and the propositions which it contains and which were judged so severely by the council, he orders and decrees that the supposed decision of the Fathers of Chalcedon with regard to this document remains in its entirety and is as unchangeable as the other definitions of the same council.”<sup>70</sup>

The accusation could not be more serious. To support it, Bishop de Sura is content to cite these few words of the *Constitutum*: “*Orthodoxa est Ibae episcopi a Patribus pronuntiata dictatio*”, giving us to understand that they signify absolutely, as Vigilius intended them, that the letter of Ibas was declared orthodox by the Fathers. Fortunately the historical sources exist for everyone to read, and that is not the meaning of Vigilius’ words. Here is what this pope actually said: “The written work dictated by Bishop Ibas was declared orthodox by the Fathers. As for the things offensive to Cyril, of blessed memory, which were said through a misunderstanding in this same letter of Bishop Ibas, the Fathers of the Council of Chalcedon, while declaring the orthodoxy of the letter, did not accept them in any way.”<sup>71</sup> This is sufficient to show that Vigilius did not approve the whole tenor of this letter which included some

70. Tome I, page 257.

71. *Orthodoxa est Ibae episcopi a Patribus pronuntiata dictatio. Illa vero quae in ipsa Ibae sacerdotis epistola in injuriis beatae recordationis Cyrilli, per errorem intelligentiae dicta sunt, Patres in sancta Chalcedonensi synodo epistolam pronuntiantes orthodoxam, nullatenus receperunt.* – Labbe, *Concilia*, tome V, col. 370.



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heterodox things, any more than the Council of Chalcedon did; it indicates, rather, that the docility of Ibas in accepting instruction from the council had prompted the Fathers to show indulgence toward a written work after its author retracted the pernicious errors in it. Moreover, Vigilius, in his *Constitutum*, gives lengthy quotations from the discussions relative to Ibas in the Council of Chalcedon, and one can easily grasp his thought, which is no doubt marked by an excess of caution, but is not at all what has been ascribed to him by Bishop de Sura, who no doubt was carried away by his preoccupation.

The discreet language used by Vigilius in reference to Ibas is shared to a certain extent by the Council of Constantinople itself. In its decree condemning the Three Chapters, it speaks with the utmost severity of the first two: *Si quis defendit impium Theodorum Mopsuestenum, etc., Si quis defendit impia Theodoriti conscripta, etc.* [If anyone defends the impious Theodore of Mopsuestia, etc., If anyone defends the impious writings of Theodoret, etc.], When it comes to the letter of Ibas, the council condemns it also as impious, but – no doubt in deference to the Council of Chalcedon – it seems to avoid declaring it authentic, like the two other works, and expresses itself in these terms: *Si quis defendit epistolam quam dicitur Ibas ad Marin Persam haereticum scripsisse, etc.*<sup>72</sup> [If anyone defends the letter which Ibas is said to have written to Mari Persa the heretic, etc.] Vigilius makes use of the same terms in his letter confirming the council.<sup>73</sup>

No one, in any event, intends to hold up the conduct of Vigilius throughout this affair as a model of apostolic firm-

72. Labbe, *Concilia*, tome V, col. 578.

73. *Ibid.*, col. 596.

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ness. It cannot be denied that he wavered, if not in his faith, then at least in his conduct. We must, however, be just toward every man, even a pope. Was Vigilius in possession of sufficient freedom at Constantinople to assure that his acts had the incontestable authority of apostolic Decrees? Justinian had had him brought to Constantinople whether he liked it or not. This emperor, infatuated with theology, had taken the initiative in a question which touched on the Faith; he behaved toward the pope as though he were his superior in the spiritual order, and the council acquiesced in his scandalous encroachments. For his part, Vigilius – deprived of the support of the Western bishops, whose presence he had demanded in vain, overwhelmed with mistreatment, tormented by the memory of the opposition which his *Judicatum* had met with in several provinces of the Latin Church – could he be regarded as thinking and acting with complete liberty? Do we have the right to consider everything that he may have done under such pressure as being invested with the authority of the Roman Pontiff?

It is a truth admitted by everyone, that the pope and an ecumenical council must be safe from violence if they are to render valid decrees. Now, it is evident that such was not the case for Vigilius at Constantinople. It is only right to apply to this unfortunate Pontiff the clause that was inserted in the official edition of the Bulls written by Pius VII to explain the omission from that collection of all the acts of this pope, from May 30, 1809 until May 4, 1814. It says there that the pope, transported far from his See and held captive, was unable to exercise any power, neither temporal nor spiritual: *nullam vel temporalem, vel spiritualem exercere potuit jurisdictionem*. The Brief of Savone and the Concordat of Fontainebleau belong to history, as does the

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*Constitutum* of Vigilius; but one cannot ascribe to them a theological or a canonical validity, because of the unhappy circumstances in which these acts were issued.

The result of all this is that Bishop de Sura, on the subject of the fifth council, has made much more noise than the successful defense of his thesis called for. This council, thanks to Vigilius, is ranked among the ecumenical councils; but one must acknowledge that it defined nothing new. Forty years later, Saint Gregory the Great still found remaining pockets of the resistance which Vigilius had feared so much in the West, and agreed on one delicate occasion to let the fifth council be passed over in silence. The queen of the Lombards, Theodelinda was preparing to return to the Church, by the ministrations of Constantius, bishop of Milan; but this princess had misgivings on the subject of the condemnation of the Three Chapters. Saint Gregory intervenes as follows in a letter to Constantius: "As for what you have written to me, that you were unwilling to forward my letter to Queen Theodelinda, because the fifth council was mentioned in it; if you thought that she could be scandalized by that, then you did well not to forward the letter. That is why we now write [again] as you preferred, so as to commend only four councils, without making any mention of the fifth council."<sup>74</sup> This precaution, inspired by charity, does not prevent Saint Gregory, however, from saying in another regard in his letter to John of Constantinople (which I quoted above) that he venerates

74. Quod scripsistis, quia epistolam meam reginae Theodelindae minime transmittere voluistis, pro eo quod quinta Synodus in ea nominabatur; si eam ex inde scandalizari posse credidistis, recte factum est ut minime transmittatur. Unde nunc ita facimus, sicut Vobis placuit, ut quatuor Synodos solummodo laudaremus, et quintae Synodi nullam mentionem faceremus. *Ad Constantium Mediolanensem*, Epist. xxxvii, lib. III.

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the fifth council as equal to the first four. Thus not only Vigilius, but also Saint Gregory the Great, long afterward, believed that he could use discreet language when it came to the condemnation of the Three Chapters, and this was so because, with reference to doctrine, the fifth council had only confirmed, without any new definition, the Faith of the councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon.

I have dealt at some length with the question of the fifth council and the wavering of Vigilius, because Bishop de Sura appears to rely a lot on this episode in the dogmatic history of the Church for the success of his system. About the supposed fall of Liberius, he does not say much at all, even though he shares on this subject the rather outdated prejudices of the Gallicans. A great advance has been made in this question in the second half of the last [i.e. eighteenth] century, thanks to the work of historical criticism. One can get some idea of it from the excellent article of Fr. Stilling on Saint Liberius in the *Acta Sanctorum*, at September 23, not to mention the monographs that have been published since. The conclusion of this scholarly research is that there was no fall of Liberius. Even before the question had been completely clarified, the majority of critics agreed in acknowledging that Liberius did not enjoy his freedom when he signed the formula of Sirmium, and that this formula, moreover, though lacking the term *consubstantial*, contained nothing but what was in conformity with the Faith of the Church.

Bishop de Sura naturally seeks to support his thesis about the personal fallibility of the Roman Pontiff with the incident of Honorius. He zealously deploys all his energy in the effort, but he cannot change the fact that the particular letter written by this pope to Sergius, reprehensible as it is,

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was not addressed to the universal Church, or that the dogmatic statements contained therein are perfectly capable of being explained in an orthodox sense. The sixth council, in stigmatizing the act of this pope, taught a solemn lesson to pastors of souls who allow themselves to be influenced by human and personal considerations in questions of faith; but that does not give us the right to rank Honorius among the heretics. This council, which was completed only with the confirming letter of Saint Leo II, merely recorded him among those who, while remaining orthodox in their thought and in their writings, are wrong in endangering the Faith by their silence, when their duty is to proclaim it and to defend it. The Holy See adhered with Roman precision to this severe sentence; yet it was so obvious that Honorius had not instructed the Church in this particular letter, in which he even sought to avoid the very idea of a definition as being untimely, that it was not until the time of the Gallican controversy that such an argument against the infallibility of the Roman pontiff could crop up.

The popes have taken note of the condemnation of Honorius, without, however, renouncing in the least the prerogative which Jesus Christ conferred upon them in Saint Peter, to teach the universal Church with infallibility. There's more: for several centuries they did not ascend to the apostolic throne until after pronouncing an anathema which included the name of their predecessor Honorius. But at this point Bishop de Sura takes a liberty which it is impossible to concede to him. He tells us that the popes of that era "signed a profession of faith in which they expressly condemned Honorius together with all the *other heretics*."<sup>75</sup> There could be no more formal way of declaring that these popes placed Honorius on the list of heretics.

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Grammatically, the expression used by Bishop de Sura has no other meaning. Let us consult therefore the text of the oath in question. Now, here is what we read: “*Auctores vero novi haeretici dogmatis, Sergium, Pyrrhum..., una cum Honorio qui pravis eorum assertionibus fomentum impendit..., simili etiam nos condemnatione percellimus anathematis.*”<sup>76</sup> [“We, too, in truth, strike down with anathemas the authors of the new heretical dogma, Serius, Pyrrhus..., in one condemnation, together with Honorius by a similar condemnation, who fomented their crooked declarations.”] It is quite evident: Sergius, Pyrrhus and the other heretics are anathematized together. Honourious is not included among them. The anathema is imposed on him solely for having fomented the development of their impious opinions by his maneuverings. Only a severe instance of absent-mindedness could explain how Bishop de Sura ever meant to combine what the text of the oath so explicitly distinguishes, and thus cause the Apostolic See to number Honorius among the heretics.

In the same way I venture to protest against another translation of Bishop de Sura. It deals with the decree of the Second Council of Lyons concerning the authority of the See of Rome and of its pontiff. The council teaches that “if questions arise in matters of faith, they must be decided by his judgment: *Si quae de fide subortae fuerint quaestiones, suo debent iudicio definiri.*” Why does Bishop de Sura translate: “It is above all by his judgment that questions concerning the Faith must be decided”? This restrictive word *surtout* [above all] is his alone; it is not in the text. In the same way again, when the Council of Lyons

75. Tome I, page 292.

76. *Liber diurnus Romanorum Pontificum*, Édition Migne, page 52.

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defines the authority of the Apostolic See in these terms: *Summum et plenum primatum et principatum super universam Ecclesiam* [The supreme and full primacy and preeminence over the universal Church], Bishop de Sura concludes from this that “every Church and every bishop is subordinate to the pope.”<sup>77</sup> This interpretation is not right, either. It is the *universal Church*, and not *every Church* and *every bishop*, which is subordinate to the pope. I understand that this definition is somewhat inconvenient to his system; but since we are dealing here with a *de fide* decree, one ought to avoid taking such liberties in translation which falsify the meaning.

Bishop de Sura tries to derive an argument against the teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff from the fact that the Bull of Nicholas III, *Exiit qui seminat*, on the poverty of Jesus Christ and the apostles, needed to be interpreted and clarified by a decretal of John XII. Why should it be surprising that documents published successively in the Church in order to explain doctrine should complete one another? The essential thing is that there never be any contradiction. Bellarmine demonstrated that there was no opposition between these various Bulls. Not only that, but Noël Alexandre, whose authority could scarcely be called into question by Bishop de Sura, learnedly maintains the same thesis.

Our author has just as little grounds for bringing forward the *Bulls Unam sanctam* and *Clericis laicos*, issued by Boniface VIII, claiming that they were *interpreted* or *revoked* by his successor, Clement V. If it is only a matter of “*explication*” [interpretation, explanation], I fail to see what harm that would do to a doctrinal Bull. Do we not interpret and explain Scripture and the Creeds every day? In reality,

77. Tome I, page 369.

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Clement V, by the chapter *Meruit* which has been inserted [as a reading] in [the Divine Office at the canonical hour of] Sext, declares that France and her king are no more subject to the Holy See than they were before the publication of the Bull *Unam sanctam*, which has as its purview all Christians in all ages. This interpretation allows the Bull to stand and in no way undermines it. As for the Bull *Clericis laicos*, which is merely a disciplinary Constitution, Clement V thought it necessary to revoke it in order to please Philip the Fair. He had the right to do so, provided that he was acting in good faith [*sauf responsabilité de conscience*]; but these are poor arguments against the dogmatic infallibility of the pope.

It is the same sort of thing when Bishop de Sura tries to derive some advantage for the supposed superiority of the council over the pope, from the fact that the sixth council judged the person of Honorius, as the Council of Vienne, judged that of Boniface VIII. One could reply, first of all, that these two popes were dead when they were said to be judged in this way; therefore they were no longer popes. No antagonism was possible between them and the council; therefore all of this is beside the question. Then, examining the facts, I would say that it was, rather, the memory of the person of Honorius that was condemned by the sixth council.

As for Boniface VIII, he is said to have been absolved by the Council of Vienne as innocent of the calumnies brought against him. Bishop de Sura says so, but the fact is that the Council of Vienne did not deal with Boniface VIII. The acts of that assembly do not say a word about him. Clement V, at Avignon, prior to the Council of Vienne, had consented to arraign his illustrious predecessor, and he had had the courage, rare in his life, to declare a complete absolution from all the misdeeds which Philip the Fair and his



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henchmen were imputing to the hero of Anagni. This fable about a judgment passed on Boniface VIII by the Council of Vienne rests upon the sole testimony of Jean Villani, who wrote in Italy and whose animus against the Avignon popes is well known. All those who have reproduced this story, including Binius, in whom Bishop de Sura placed too much confidence, have done nothing more than repeat the assertion of Villani; this is demonstrated by Antoine Pagi in Volume IV of his *Breviarium historico-chronologico-criticum Pontificum romanorum* [Historical, Chronological, and Critical Summary of the Roman Pontiffs], and Catalani, in Volume IV of his *Concilia generalia* [General Councils].

Bishop de Sura naturally bases his system upon the decrees of the Council of Constance. He returns to it unceasingly. I will say only one word about it, and only about the question of fact, which is all that I intend to deal with in the present chapter. The author says therefore, that if infallibility is a divine privilege of the Supreme Pontiff, then the decrees of the sixth and of the fifth sessions of the Council of Constance “necessarily called forth a protest on the part of the Supreme Pontiffs and the majority of the bishops.” Then he adds: “Did this necessary protest arise, did it make itself heard? Let someone give conclusive evidence for it.”<sup>78</sup>

The best of all the proofs which one could give to Bishop de Sura concerning the inanity of the decrees of Constance relative to the infallibility of the pope is the liberty granted throughout the Church, for several centuries now, by the Supreme Pontiffs and the Bishops to the theologians to teach that these decrees, if they have validity, apply exclusively to a time of schism. It is clear that if their authority were real, like that of the decrees of the Council

78. Tome II, page 136.

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of Trent for example, this liberty would not be given. We must therefore turn against Bishop de Sura the axiom of Saint Augustine which he quotes in the same passage: *Ecclesia quae sunt contra fidem non tacet*. [The Church does not remain silent about things contrary to the Faith.] All of Scholasticism, with the exception of a very small French minority, teaches against the validity of the decrees of Constance; the Church keeps silence; therefore the decrees of Constance in no way involve the Faith.

I will not follow Bishop de Sura through all that he says on the subject of the Council of Basel. One has a right to apply to this assembly the saying of our Savior: *A fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos*. [By their fruits ye shall know them.] A legitimate pope deposed, an anti-pope enthroned; such are the fruits of the *décennalité conciliaire* [the “principle” of holding general councils every ten years] decreed at Constance and applied at Basel. A few bishops, gathered in this city, never reaching twenty in number, and claiming to dictate law to the universal Church, to the point of cutting off her head! A Catholic heart suffers at the humiliations that Eugene IV had to submit to. The weaknesses to which this false situation drove him are lamentable. God avenged him by blessing his Council of Florence, where that magnificent decree formulated in Greek and in Latin was issued, against which the enemies of the monarchy of Saint Peter will always be shattered.

There are many other facts or interpretations of facts in the voluminous memorandum of Bishop de Sura which we could take up, but we must limit ourselves. At any rate it is impossible to overlook what is said in the Third Book, Chapter XIV, that the Clergy of France was not reprovved by the Holy See for having initiated procedures, in the

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Assembly of 1705, leading to the acceptance of the Bull *Vineam Domini*, with an investigation and a formal judgment.<sup>79</sup> Bishop de Sura has as his theologian in this matter Chancellor d'Aguesseau whom he is fond of quoting. This does not say much for his orthodoxy, since the writings of this illustrious magistrate on ecclesiastical matters contain a lot of things worthy of censure. To counter the highly incompetent opinion of this scholarly layman we have the Brief – as severe as it is eloquent – by which the saintly and learned Pope Clement XI censured the conduct of these prelates and stood up with thoroughly apostolic vigor against a practice which may have had the approval of Parliament, but which was to such a high degree injurious to the prerogative of the one who is by divine right the Teacher of all Christians. Bishop de Sura, however, is aware of this Brief which completely overturns his claim, since he cites the letter that Fenelon wrote to Cardinal Gabrielli on this occasion. Why then not even mention it? Why not speak about the letter that Cardinal de Noailles, together with six archbishops and five bishops, wrote to the pope, dated March 10, 1710, in an effort to explain the conduct of the Assembly? Among other things, one reads there that “this Assembly *did not claim at all that the Assemblies of the Clergy have the right to investigate the decisions of the popes in order to make themselves their judges*; that it only wanted to confront such decisions with the opinions which it has about the Faith; and that it recognized with a surpassing joy that it has always thought and believed in the same way in which Your Holiness has expressed himself therein, as the bishops of France once wrote to great Saint Leo.”<sup>80</sup>

79. Tome I, page 529.

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As for the Brief itself, it can be found in the collection of the apostolic letters of Clement XI, with another Brief which the pontiff addressed to Louis XIV so as to complain about the conduct of the Assembly and to protest against its claim. I do not quote here the translation of the Brief to the Bishops, because this document is extremely long. The reader will find the entire text of it at the end of the present work.

I think that I have demonstrated sufficiently that legitimate objections deprive the book by Bishop de Sura of the authority that it would have to have, in order to produce the effect that the author intended. But since this book was written principally for the purpose of preventing, if possible, the definition of the infallibility of the pope as a dogma of Faith by the Vatican Council. Since Bishop de Sura maintains that

80. D'Avrigny, *Mémoires*, Tome IV, page 269.

The severe Brief of Clement XI to the bishops of the Assembly of the Clergy of France in 1705, occasioned by the right of judgment that they had claimed to exercise upon the Bull *Vineam Domini*, prompted Fenelon to write to Cardinal Gabrielli in 1707 a letter in which the prelate tries to maintain that bishops have the character of judges with regard to a dogmatic Constitution of the Holy See. It is well known that Fenelon admitted the infallibility of the pope and that he even composed a learned defense of it in a separate treatise. His thought, therefore, was not that the adherence of the bishops could confer upon a dogmatic Bull a quality with which, in his view, it was already endowed. *Verum quidem est*, he says, *causam ita esse finitam per judicium a Sede Apostolica pronuntiatum, ut nulli catholico Antistiti deinceps liceat de hac definitione ambigere, vel deliberare an respuenda sit*. [Moreover it is true that a case is closed in such a way by a judgment pronounced by the Apostolic See, that no Catholic Hierarchy is even permitted to doubt this definition, or to deliberate as to whether it should be rejected.] (*Oeuvres*, Tome II, page 455). A right of judgment with regard to a decision, the validity of which *it is not even permitted to doubt*, is, one must admit, rather difficult to conceive of, and it is natural to recall that subtlety which was the intellectual characteristic of the great archbishop, and which once led him astray momentarily, when he was seen to borrow innocently from Quietism the principles whose consequences he wished to curtail.

One realizes the motives that influenced his thinking when one reads the Brief of Clement XI. At that moment all his pastoral zeal was employed in combating Jansenism, of which he was the most formidable adversary. The Bull *Vineam Domini* had fulfilled his highest hopes in condemning the system of *respectful silence*. All that he wanted was to see this Constitution published in France. The news of its acceptance by the Assembly of 1705 had been a great consolation for him; but the

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such a definition would be theologically impossible, besides being a calamity for the Church, it will be permissible for me just as well to propose here the thesis that this truth can be defined and to explain the advantages that the Church would derive from its definition. In 1850 I ventured to treat a question of the same order relative to the Immaculate Conception. The situation is the same today with regard to papal infallibility. Consequently, with the same simplicity I make use of the right of every theologian, submitting my work to the sacred council for its correction, and accepting in advance, with complete submission, every Decree which the Holy Spirit will prompt it to issue on any subject whatsoever.

arrival of the Brief of Clement XI to the bishops had disturbed him. He wondered how this vigorous reprimand would be received by the prelates whose feelings towards the Apostolic See were scarcely benevolent, as he notes candidly in his letter to Cardinal Gabrielli. He feared the scandal of an opposition that would have been to the advantage of Jansenism, and in order to disarm Rome he strove to give a more acceptable cast to the idea of *judges* and *judgment*, by trying to reconcile the unchangeable character of a papal definition with the reality of a judicial authority on the part of the bishops. Three years later the Cardinal de Noailles, together with several of his colleagues, addressed respectful explanations to Clement XI and retracted the claim of the Assembly of 1705. Thus the affair ended, and when the same Pontiff, some years afterward, issued the Bull *Unigenitus*, it was accepted in the Assembly of 1714, without the offensive formulae that the Assembly of 1705 had employed. It is necessary to protest here against certain statements of P. Matignon in the [journal] *Études religieuses*, January [1870] issue, concerning what took place with reference to the acceptance of the Bull *Vineam Domini*. Here is how he recounts the facts: "In his well-known letter to Cardinal Gabrielli, Fenelon *established* that the acceptance of pontifical acts, even though they do not cease to be obligatory, *must* be carried out nevertheless on the part of the bishops by way of judgment. *This doctrine proved to be true*. On March 10, 1710 six archbishops and five bishops, who had taken part in the assembly, wrote to Rome *along these lines*, and Clement XI concluded by declaring that he was satisfied." The truth is precisely the opposite. Clement XI did not declare himself *satisfied* at all with the mediation attempted by Fenelon in his letter to Cardinal Gabrielli. That letter is from 1707, and it was not until 1710 that peace was made between Clement XI and the prelates of the Assembly of 1705, with the letter of formal retraction which I have just cited, and which P. Matignon was in a position to read in the *Memoirs* of d'Avrigny.

# Part II

## The Papal Monarchy

*Can the personal infallibility of the Roman Pontiff  
be the object of a doctrinal definition which would  
make it a dogma of the Catholic Faith?*

### Preliminary concepts.

I. The definition of a revealed dogma is one of the greatest benefits that God can grant to His Church. All the truths that Jesus Christ taught are light and life, and the explicit declaration of them, over the course of the centuries, supplies Christianity in each instance with a new degree of strength and splendor. Their awareness of the Faith, therefore, should make the faithful desire the development of the Creed, so that they might enter more and more into possession of the truth which the Son of God has brought to earth. Happiness in heaven will consist in the vision of the truth. The increasing wealth of the Creed of revealed dogmas brings us closer and closer to it here below. The elect see what we believe; but the more defined truths we have to believe in, the more we are aware of being united to them amidst the shadows of our mortal lot.

II. The sum total of the truths revealed by Jesus Christ rests in the consciousness of the Church, under the protection of the Holy Spirit, of Whom the Savior said: "He will abide with you forever . . . [and] He will . . . bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you."<sup>1</sup> The

1. John 14:16, 26.

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Church, from the first day of its existence until the consummation of the world, has lived and will live, therefore, on the totality of truth which Jesus Christ has entrusted to her; but the rays of this truth, proceeding from the hearth at the heart of the Church, have not pierced the walls and shone forth all at once. God willed that there be a sequence in their appearance. Yet their light is both old and new: old, because it has always gleamed in the hearth which is the intimate awareness of the Church; new, when it spreads beyond by the action of the Holy Spirit.

III. When a revealed truth attains definition, one can still say about it *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus* [what has been taught always, everywhere and by everyone]; because it has always been present, at least implicitly, in the thinking and in the Faith of the Church, which professed it in another truth that was declared explicitly. Thus, for example, the Church from the very beginning repeated with Saint John: "The Word was made flesh," and at Ephesus she declared that one and only one person must be acknowledged in the God-Man. At Chalcedon, developing the mystery, she taught her faithful that this personality of the Word incarnate existed in two natures, divine and human. At Constantinople, she decreed that a Christian must acknowledge in Jesus Christ a double will and a double operation. So again, the Holy See, in confirming the two councils of Africa at the time of Saint Augustine, taught that fallen man cannot, without divine grace, perform any good whatsoever in the supernatural order; and later, against the Jansenist heresy, the same authority taught that human freedom injured by the Fall had remained capable of merit and demerit, and that man can resist interior grace.

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IV. The definition of a dogma in the Church is always facilitated by a preliminary assent, which means that this dogma corresponds to the aspirations of the Christian community, or else to a need for unity on the question that will be decided by the definition. Sometimes this assent is already morally unanimous, even before the proclamation of the dogma, as we saw with the Immaculate Conception. Sometimes the large majority of believers already strongly support the future decision, while a minority still seems, in good faith, to remain in favor of the ideas which the definition will proscribe; this is what took place when the Council of Trent, by its Decree of the sixth session, put an end to the controversies on justification.

V. Jesus Christ, Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, has promised to remain with His Church until the consummation of the world. He sent her His Spirit to animate and govern her, just as our soul governs and animates our body. This divine Spirit maintains in her the unity and invariability of the Faith, so that she is the Bride of Christ, having neither spot nor wrinkle,<sup>2</sup> the pillar and ground of the truth.<sup>3</sup> This marvelous gift granted to a society composed of individual members of the human race, and which is consequently fallible from the natural perspective, is called infallibility. By virtue of this gift, the Church will never see error prevail within her bosom. According to the famous axiom of Saint Augustine, she can neither approve, nor do, nor tolerate in silence what is against the Faith or against morality.

VI. It is the Church considered in her totality that is called by Saint Paul the Bride of Christ. She it is against

2. Ephesians 5:27.

3. 1 Timothy 3:15.



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whom the gates of hell shall not prevail.<sup>4</sup> It is she who possesses *in solidum* [whole and entire] all revealed truths, she who preserves them and develops them over the course of the centuries. She is unique,<sup>5</sup> and there can not be more than one. She is Holy, and no one outside of her can be holy. Anyone who separates from her, separates himself from Christ, and there is no salvation anywhere except in her bosom. Her children are called the *faithful*, because it is through faith that they adhere to her. The one who strays from the teaching of the Church, be it only in one article, at once ceases to be part of her. He is a branch detached from the trunk; life no longer circulates through him. He will be thrown into the fire, like useless deadwood.

VII. Since the doctrine and the teaching of the Church are the doctrine and teaching of Jesus Christ Himself, it follows, according to the expression of the Apostle, that the Church “brings into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of the Faith,”<sup>6</sup> and that each one of its members must be habitually disposed to submit his intellect to all that she teaches, to all that she has taught, and to all that she shall teach in the order of revealed truth. This disposition is not optional; it is strictly obligatory under pain of losing salvation.

VIII. But just as in the human body, as the Apostle says, there is a variety of members, and just as the members do not work in the same way;<sup>7</sup> so too, in His Church, Jesus Christ has established various degrees, whose harmony adds even more to the beauty of the Bride. There is the teaching Church and the learning Church, which form one

4. Matthew 16:18.

5. Canticle of Canticles 6:8.

6. 2 Corinthians 10:5.

7. Romans 12:4.

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and the same Church, but which nevertheless are distinct. The teaching Church has received from Jesus Christ the authority and the power to promulgate revealed doctrine, and in this ministry she possesses the gift of active infallibility. The learning Church, which is composed of the clergy of the second order [i.e. priests and deacons] and of the faithful people, has the duty to accept with submission the doctrine which is transmitted to it by the teaching Church ; to the latter it was said: "He who hears you, hears Me."<sup>8</sup> This more numerous part of the Church has not received the gift of active infallibility, but it enjoys passive infallibility. Each one of its members is fallible; yet this vast body, to which Jesus Christ is present until the consummation of the world, and which is animated by the Holy Spirit, will never see truth be extinguished within her bosom. The witness of the Christian people is always one of the foundations upon which the teaching Church bases her decisions in questions of faith. The teaching Church, in virtue of its active infallibility, pronounces a doctrinal decision with authority; the Christian people receive it with submission in virtue of its passive infallibility. The same Holy Spirit works in this authority and in this submission, both of which produce the unity which Jesus Christ requested of His Father for us, and which He wanted to resemble the unity that is between His Father and Him.<sup>9</sup>

IX. If we consider now the teaching Church, she in turn appears to us to be formed of two elements. The first of these elements, the Papacy, is unique; the second, the Episcopacy, is multiple. The Papacy established by Jesus Christ in Saint Peter resides in the Roman Pontiff. The Episcopacy founded

8. Luke 9:16.

9. Cf. John 17:11.

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in the Apostles exists in each bishop and in the episcopal college as a whole. These two elements are of divine institution. The Roman Pontiff has inherited the universal jurisdiction from Saint Peter, and all members of the Church without exception are his subjects: lambs and sheep and are placed under obedience to him. The Episcopacy is one; yet in contrast to the apostolic college, each one of its members, taken singly, has jurisdiction only over that portion of the Church which is assigned to him.

X. It is for the purpose of maintaining unity in His Church that Christ founded her upon one man. He said: "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build My Church." This Rock, this foundation stone of the Church must exist forever, since the Church which it must support is immortal. Hence it has been continually identified with the pope, that is to say, with the bishop who succeeds Saint Peter in the See of Rome. The Episcopate as a whole is one by the adherence of each of its members to this one head. The pope is not the entire body of the teaching Church, just as in the human body the head does not exist without the members; but just as the members without the head are not a human body, so too the Episcopate, isolated from its head, would not represent the teaching Church.

XI. The pope and the Episcopate, by the very fact that they constitute the teaching Church, exercise judicial power concerning the Faith, which consists of discerning revealed truth and proposing it infallibly to the whole assembly of the faithful. In a council, the Holy Spirit presides over this agreement, and the infallible doctrinal judgment issued by the pope and the Episcopate is one and the same judgment, endowed with one and the same infallibility, which is that of the teaching Church.

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XII. The power of Christ's promises and the action of the Holy Spirit appear in a supernatural manner, in that the bishops, who individually do not possess the privilege of infallibility which the Apostles had (even though they have inherited from them the character of Holy Orders and the judicial authority of their rank), become infallible in a council, by remaining united with their head and with their brethren who maintain the same union with him. Thus, while considering the Church in its entirety and in the parts that constitute it according to the divine plan, we have gone from the passive infallibility of the Christian people to the active infallibility of the Episcopate united with its head. Now comes the question of the infallibility of the pope himself.

XIII. Is the pope personally infallible, so that his infallibility is the crowning of that privilege belonging to the Episcopate, just as the active infallibility of the pope and of the Episcopate functions as the "form" for the passive infallibility [the "matter"] of the Christian people who comply with it? Everyone acknowledges that the college of bishops possesses infallibility only on the condition of being in agreement with the pope; must we conclude from this that the pope himself is infallible only when he is united to the Episcopate? In a council, I repeat, there is only one simultaneous judgment; the Holy Spirit animates this great body, the entire college of bishops, and watches so as to preserve from all error the decrees that it issues. But a council is a rare event, difficult to convene, and it belongs to the order of fact rather than to the order of law. The important question that must be asked, then, is this: Outside of a council, when debate arises concerning doctrine, and the pope, who has the care of all the churches, issues a definitive judgment in virtue of that commanding position which Saint Irenaeus

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speaks of, is this judgment infallible in and of itself, so that one can say from then on, with Saint Augustine: "The case is closed"? Or is it necessary, for this judgment to be unchangeable, that the Episcopate dispersed throughout the world take note of it, judge it and give it validity? In a word, did Jesus Christ establish in the person of Saint Peter and of his successors a permanent doctrinal sovereignty, capable of attending day by day to the needs of the Church in matters of doctrine? Or did He make the unity of the Faith, the primary need of His Church, depend upon an agreement between the pope and the Episcopate which requires a lot of time to be reached, and which the recalcitrant can debate at great length?

XIV. This is the question that people suppose must be debated in the Vatican Council. It is undeniable that it is of the utmost practical interest, since the believer's act of faith depends upon it, and since, besides the ecumenical councils, scarcely a century has passed since the Church was founded, in which the Roman pontiff has not made a pronouncement about the Faith, and he has even done so more than once in the same century. Bishop de Sura is not satisfied with affirming that a definition by the next council in favor of the infallibility of the pope would be a huge calamity. He goes so far as to maintain that the elements of this definition are totally lacking, and he heaps up a whole series of impossibilities. Let us investigate with him then, speculatively, whether these elements would not be found, nevertheless, and under the best possible conditions, in case it should please the Holy Spirit to incline the council toward this definition, which many want and which some dread.

XV. The first thing to do would be to consult Scripture, to see whether material can be found there for

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an inductive argument in favor of the infallibility of Saint Peter in his successors.

Tradition, which is the Word of God, just as Scripture is, would have to be consulted also. One finds it in the writings of the Church Fathers who testify to the Faith of their time, and above all to the practices of the Church, which the Holy Spirit guides continually, and which He must safeguard from all erroneous conduct which could lead the faithful astray.

Doctrinal debates that may have taken place at various times and which involve the Church's responsibility would be weighed in their turn. They have a right to be included among the grounds for such a great cause.

The opinion of the Scholastic doctors would likewise be consulted, as one of the elements of any definition; because Scholasticism, although it holds a rank inferior to that of the Fathers, offers no less a witness of the utmost gravity in questions of doctrine, when it tends toward unanimity therein, provided that these doctors have studied a matter profoundly, that they taught in the various parts of the Church, and that they published their books under the supervision and with the direct or indirect approval of the Pastors of the Church.

The opinion of the Christian people must be taken into account for the reasons presented above. In a council, the learning Church is represented by the bishops. Its testimony, which proceeds from the Christian *sensus communis* maintained and developed by the action of the Holy Spirit, must be left completely at liberty, so that it can be enunciated just as it is by the Pastors, who are the voice of the Christian people in the council.

The opinion of the Saints, who make up the noblest part of the Church's soul, merits a particularly careful

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reception, because we have every reason to attribute it to the influence of the Holy Spirit Who reigned in them during their mortal life.

Finally the council must keep its eye fixed upon previous Conciliar Decrees, since it has the power to develop, to confirm and to apply the doctrine taught therein. One council is certainly not above another council, but the same Holy Spirit animates and directs them all.

It is scarcely necessary to add that the incidents that take place while a council is in session, even though they may belong to history, are not the council. That consists in the totality of the Decrees which have been formulated in a conciliar manner so as to be published in the Church and to have the force of law, after confirmation by the Roman Pontiff.

## **I. Does the personal infallibility of the Roman Pontiff have its foundation in Scripture?**

The Holy Gospel according to Saint Matthew, chapter 16, teaches us that the Savior, wishing to reward Simon, His disciple, for the witness that he had just borne to His divinity, said to him: “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church”.

Obviously the Lord wanted to grant to this Apostle in return a prerogative that He did not confer upon the others, since He spoke to him alone, because only he had answered the question that Jesus had just posed to them all.

In this situation Jesus speaks about His Church for the first time. He announces His intention to build it Himself; but He already lays the foundation upon which He will establish it.

A foundation laid by God Himself could never fail. If the building which it supports must last, it will owe its endurance to the unshakeable foundation. Jesus gives to Simon, then, a quality which he did not have previously. Until then he was a simple apostle like the others; henceforth he is set apart. His name is changed; he will be called Peter, the Rock. Now, the Rock is one of the prophetic names for Christ Himself. The Messiah is announced as someone who will be the precious stone, the cornerstone, the foundation stone.<sup>10</sup> Therefore it is His own name which

10. Isaiah 28:16.



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Jesus is giving to Simon, as though He said to him: “I am the inviolable Rock, the Cornerstone, Who reunite two things in one; I am the foundation besides which no man can lay another [cf. 1 Corinthians 3:11]; nevertheless thou, also, art Peter, because by My strength thou art made firm, so that the things which are proper to Me by power and authority might be shared with thee by participation.”<sup>11</sup>

Peter is therefore, with Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ, the foundation of the Church, and Church could not exist apart from this unshakeable foundation. He who says Peter means the entire series of his successors, because Peter cannot die; otherwise, the Church, no longer having a foundation, would not exist. The prerogatives of Peter belong personally to him and to the entire succession of Roman Pontiffs, which Tradition in its totality has acknowledged to form together with him but one single person, with respect to the rights of the Pontificate.

The foundation is unique, *super hanc Petram* [upon this Rock], because there is only one Christ; it is unique, because there is only one Church. Everything must be based upon this foundation, both the apostles and the disciples; both the bishops and the priests and also the faithful people, in a word, the entire Church: *super hanc Petram aedificabo Ecclesiam meam* [upon this Rock I will build My Church].

In laying this foundation, Jesus Christ had to make it

11. *Et ego, inquit, dico tibi: hoc est, sicut Pater meus tibi manifestavit divinitatem meam, ita et ego tibi notam facio excellentiam tuam: Quia tu es Petrus: id est, cum ego sim inviolabilis Petra, ego Lapis angularis, qui facio utraque unum, ego fundamentum praeter quod nemo potest aliud ponere; tamen tu quoque Petra es, quia mea virtute solidaris, ut quae mihi potestate sunt propria, sint tibi mecum participatione communia.* S. Leo *In anniversario Assumptionis suae*. Sermon. iv. [The passage begins: “He says, *And I say to thee*: that is, just as My Father has manifested to thee My divinity, so too I make known to thee thine excellence: *For thou art Peter*: that is, while I am the inviolable Rock . . . etc.”]

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unshakeable, to guarantee that it would not fall; otherwise the foundation would bring the building down with it, or else the edifice would have to rest henceforth upon another foundation. Now, on the one hand the Church cannot perish; on the other hand, she is the Church only because she is established upon the Rock. The Rock therefore cannot fail. If the Roman Pontiff could teach error, either the Church would follow him, and she would cease to be the Church, having separated herself from the Faith which is her vital element; or else she would no longer be based on the one upon whom Christ placed her, and she would lose the character of the true Church. Since both the one and the other are contrary to the promises of Jesus Christ, it follows from the Savior's words that the pope, when he teaches the Church, is personally infallible.

In Saint Luke, chapter 22, we read these words of the Savior to Saint Peter: "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you [the Apostles], that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren."

Tradition in the East as well as in the West has seen in these words, not merely a particular incident in the life of Saint Peter, but a distinct prerogative granted to this Apostle as head of the entire Church, a prerogative continued in his successors.

The Apostles are in danger from Satan; Jesus could help them directly; He does not. Their faith is at risk; Peter will be the one to save them. To accomplish this, it is enough that his faith not fail; for, built upon Peter, they must believe as he does. The Savior intervenes in this marvelous work by obtaining through His divine prayer that the Faith of Peter always be firm and unchanging.

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Strengthened by this support which is unfailing, Peter will be the strength of his brethren. Confirmed by him, they will resist the snares and attacks of Satan; and this happy outcome, in which Peter is only the instrument, will be due to the efficacy of the prayer of the Son of God. "Therefore," says Saint Leo, "in Peter, the fortitude of all the others is secured, and the help of divine grace is ordered in such a way, that the firmness which is granted to Peter through Christ is conferred by Peter upon the apostles."<sup>12</sup> Peter, who cannot die, since the Church lives by him, will be the universal teacher in the whole series of his successors. The Church will owe to Peter the immutable character of her faith, which is her very life, and all the honor and glory for this is due to the merciful goodness of the Savior Who has worked this miracle by His prayer.

Therefore when Jesus Christ declares that the Faith of Peter will never fail, does He not say by that very promise that Peter will be infallible in his teaching? When He gives him the task of confirming his brothers in the Faith, does he not teach us by that very act that Peter's steadfastness in faith does not come from his brothers, but rather that the steadfastness which they themselves possess comes from the confirmation, from the strengthening which Peter bestows upon them? Now, it is in the order of faith that this prerogative is given to Peter in particular, and in him to the Roman Pontiff; the conclusion, then, can be none other than this: The Roman Pontiff is personally infallible in teaching the Faith.

In Saint John, chapter 21, Jesus Christ, in the presence of His apostles, asks Saint Peter for an assurance of his love.

12. In Petro ergo omnium fortitudo munitur, et divinae gratiae ita ordinatur auxilium, ut firmitas, quae per Christum Petro tribuitur, per Petrum apostolis conferatur. S. Leo, *loc. cit.*

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Twice He tells him: “Feed my sheep”, and one last time: “Feed my lambs.” Peter’s conversion had taken place, the Savior was going to leave the earth in a few days, and the moment had come to establish in his duties the one whom Jesus had announced when, speaking about His Church, He had said: “There shall be one fold and one shepherd.”<sup>13</sup> Just as He had made Simon, son of John a partaker in His divine character of Rock, so too, after portraying Himself under the name and with the characteristics of a Shepherd,<sup>14</sup> He conferred upon him this same title, to rule over the entire flock, over the sheep and over the lambs. There are other Shepherds who pasture the flock, but Peter is the Shepherd of Shepherds, and that way there is unity in the flock. This is expressed so truly by that ancient bishop of Gaulon, whose Sermons have been preserved for us under the name of Eusebius of Emesa: “Christ,” he says, “first entrusted to Peter the lambs, then the sheep, because He made him not only Shepherd, but Shepherd of the Shepherds. Peter therefore feeds the lambs and he also feeds the sheep; he feeds the little ones and he feeds their mothers; he governs the subjects and those who are set over them. He is therefore the Shepherd of all, for besides lambs and sheep there is nothing else in the Church.”<sup>15</sup>

The first duty of the Shepherd is to teach the flock; for the flock can only live on the truth. If the Shepherd who feeds the lambs and the sheep, in the name of the Master, taught error, either he would pervert the lambs and the

13. John 10:16.

14. John 11:14.

15. Prius agnos, deinde oves commisit ei, quia non solum Pastorem sed Pastorem Pastorum eum constituit. Pascit igitur Petrus agnos, [pascit et oves;] pascit filios, pascit et matres: regit et subditos, et praelatos. Omnium igitur Pastor est, quia praeter agnos et oves, in Ecclesia nihil est. – Euseb. Emiss., *Homil. in Vigilia SS. Apost.* – *Biblioth. PP. Lugd.* Tom. VI, pag. 794.

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sheep that are in his care, and the flock would perish; or else the sheep would resist the Shepherd, and there would be no more unity in the sheepfold. Now the promises of Jesus Christ assure us that neither one nor the other of these calamities is possible, since the overthrow of the Church would ensue. We must conclude, therefore, that the Roman Pontiff, by the very fact that he is the universal Shepherd, possesses personal infallibility as to doctrine.

## **II. The personal infallibility of the pope has its foundation in Tradition.**

Nothing is more surely attested in the Gospel than the dogma of the monarchy of Saint Peter, since the Holy Spirit willed that the principle upon which the whole Church is based should be noted in an irrefutable manner by the very letter of Scripture. On this subject there is likewise a wealth of tradition, much more abundant documentation than exists for most other dogmas. As for the consequences of the three biblical texts from which papal infallibility is deduced with so much clarity, these are constantly being expressed or applied in the monuments of [the Church's] Tradition. We will survey rapidly this mass of facts; but before doing that it is important to highlight the Church's practice in evaluating pontifical decisions in matters of doctrine.

Two points must be established here. Have the Roman Pontiffs always pronounced decisions in matters of doctrine? Have these decisions always been regarded by the Church as *closing the case*?

*Overview of the power of infallibility as  
exercised by the popes in the teaching of doctrine,  
and the Church's approval of this authority.*

As early as the period prior to official toleration of the Church, the popes can be seen exercising their sovereign

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judicial authority with regard to the Faith through the condemnation of errors, which is bound up with the proclamation of the truth. Despite the loss of an immense number of documents from that primitive era, we can still gather quite a large number of facts from what remains.

Saint Epiphanius informs us that the heresiarch Ebion was condemned by Saint Clement. According to Saint Irenaeus, Tertullian and Eusebius, Cerdo and Valentine were excluded from the Church by Saint Hyginus. The same Saint Irenaeus shows us Saint Anicetus excommunicating Marcion. The errors of Montanus were proscribed, according to Eusebius, by Saint Eleutherius, and those of the Cataphrygians by Saint Victor. Saint Zephyrinus issued against the Montanist doctrines a new decretal, which Tertullian, after his fall [into heresy], attempts to parody, saying that it bears the title *Pontifex maximus, Episcopus episcoporum* [Supreme Pontiff, bishop of bishops]. Through the calumnies that the author of the *Philosophoumena* heaps upon Saint Callistus, we can glimpse the fact that this pope had issued doctrinal decrees which had been spread abroad throughout the world. Saint Cornelius condemns the heresy of Novatian. Saint Dionysius of Alexandria denounces the error of Sabellius to Saint Sixtus II. Pope Saint Dionysius proscribes it, and his successor Saint Felix I makes it the object of a new decision. Saint Dionysius of Alexandria, while combating the error of Sabellius, is accused of having fallen into the opposite error. He successfully explains his position to Pope Saint Dionysius, whom he later informs against Paul of Samosata, whom the Council of Antioch had just deposed and whose doctrine, denying the divinity of the Word, the pope in turn condemns.

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With the end of official persecution of the Church, a series of great heresies begins, which the Christian emperors too often promote. The popes continue to exercise supreme judicial authority in matters of faith throughout the Church. After Arius spews forth his heretical venom against the Divine Word, a council is held at Alexandria to condemn this blasphemer. The acts thereof are sent to Saint Sylvester, as Liberius informs us, but we no longer have the decretal by which these acts were confirmed. After the Council of Nicea, Saint Julius condemns a new form of Arianism proposed by Photius, bishop of Sirmium. At the report of Sozomenus, Liberius addresses a solemn letter to the bishops of the East, to bring them to profess the consubstantial Trinity with the Westerners. The historian adds: "After this letter, the controversy having been terminated by the judgment of the Roman Church, all held their peace, and the matter seemed at last to have come to an end."<sup>16</sup>

In 378 Saint Damasus publishes his famous letter entitled *Tractatoria* against the errors of Apollinaris and Macedonius. We learn from Saint Jerome that Saint Siricius pronounced a sentence condemning the heresy of Jovinian. The same holy doctor informs us of the decree which Saint Anastasius I issued against the errors of Origen. Earlier we saw Saint Innocent I confirming the two councils of Africa against Pelagius, and we heard Saint Augustine exclaim: "The case is closed." Everyone [in France] is familiar with the decretal that Saint Celestine sent to the bishops of Gaul in order to condemn semi-Pelagianism. No one is unaware of the letters of the same pope against Nestorius and his

16. Quo facto, utpote controversia iudicio Romanae Ecclesiae terminata, *singuli quievire: eaque quaestio finem tandem accepisse videbatur.* – Sozomen., *Hist.*, cap. xxii. Critics have rightly noted with astonishment that Bishop de Sura, obliged to cite this passage, begins the quotation only at the word *singuli*.



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doctrine, nor of that written by Saint Leo to Flavian on the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word. We also have the decretal of this last-mentioned Pontiff, addressed to Saint Turibius of Astorga against the errors of the Priscillianists. Saint Gelasius, in the Council of Rome in 494, officially determines the Canon of Sacred Scripture. Saint Hormisdas by his decision puts an end to the controversy which had arisen over the proposition: *Unus de Trinitate passus est*. [One of the Trinity died.] Boniface II confirms by a decretal the canons of the Second Council of Orange against semi-Pelagianism, just as Saint Innocent had sanctioned with his sovereign authority those canons of Carthage and of Mileve against Pelagius.

The Monothelite heresy having reared its head, Saint Martin I remedies the negligence of Honorius, who had refused to make a pronouncement on the question, and condemns this new form of Monophysitism in a Council of Rome. Saint Agatho addresses to the emperor, and through him to the Sixth Council, his dogmatic letter against such a dangerous error. The Iconoclasts are vanquished by the decretals of Saint Gregory II and Saint Adrian I. The latter Pontiff intervenes in Spain to condemn the heresy of Adoptionism, held by Elipandus of Toledo and Felix of Urgel. Saint Nicholas I proscribes the error of the Theopaschites.

The error of Berenger is repeatedly struck with anathemas by Saint Leo IX, Victor II, Nicholas II and Saint Gregory VII. Roscelin, condemned by the Council of Soissons in 1092 for his errors concerning the Trinity, is impeached before the tribunal of Urban II by Saint Anselm. Callistus II censures the heresy of Pierre de Bruys at the Council of Toulouse in 1119. Arnauld of Brescia and his doctrine are anathematized by Innocent II in a Council of

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Rome in 1139. The following year the same pope, having traveled to France, condemns nineteen propositions of Abelard, at the council of Rheims and Sens in 1140. In 1148 Eugene III intervenes in the doctrinal judgment of Gilbert de la Porrée, at the Council of Rheims in 1148, and compels this philosopher to renounce his errors concerning the divine essence. For the sake of brevity I omit the numerous dogmatic definitions which are included in the *Corps du Droit* [Compendium of Law], beginning with Alexander III. Several of them are letters to individuals or particular groups, but their inclusion in this official collection, destined for the entire Church, is for them as good as a complete promulgation. Let us continue our list of apostolic judgments in matters of doctrine.

Innocent III, with a dogmatic letter, determines the profession of faith that will be required of the Vaudois before they are admitted to reconciliation. Alexander IV and Clement IV condemn the doctrine of the book by Saint-Amour, *Des périls des derniers temps* [On the Dangers of Recent Times], and John XXII proscribes the curialist errors of Marsilius of Padua and the rationalist theology of Ekkehard. In 1336 Benedict XII publishes a solemn Constitution in which he defines the proposition that the souls of the saints enjoy the beatific vision before the day of judgment. Pius II, in the council of Mantua in 1459, publishes the Bull *Execrabilis* against those who appeal from the judgment of the pope to a general council. Sixtus IV condemns as scandalous and heretical the propositions of Pedro of Osma. Leo X issues the Bull *Exsurge, Domine*, in which he proscribes forty-one propositions of Luther. Paul IV condemns the errors of the Socinians by his Constitution *Cum quorundam*.

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After the Council of Trent, the Roman Pontiffs continue in the following manner to exercise their right of teaching the Church from their lofty apostolic throne. Saint Pius V, with his Bull *Ex omnibus afflictionibus* in 1567, proscribes the seventy-nine propositions of Michel Baius which form the basis of Jansenism. In 1647 Innocent X condemns the heresy of the two Heads of the Church by a decree of the Holy Office. In 1653, at the request of eighty-five French bishops, he blasts the five propositions of Jansen. When the sect devises the stratagem of distinguishing *de facto* from *de jure* in order to avoid this anathema, Alexander VII deprives them of this subterfuge in 1665 by publishing the *Formulary*, in his Constitution *Regimini*. That same year the same pope proscribes with a decree twenty-eight propositions on morals, and forty-five the following year. Sixty-five others are condemned by Innocent XI in 1679. The same pope establishes the true doctrine concerning the contemplative life by censuring the system of Quietism expressed in the sixty-eight propositions of Molinos. The new fruits of the Jansenist error are noted and proscribed in 1690 by Alexander VIII in thirty-one propositions. Twenty-three others, taken from the book of the *Maxims of the Saints*, are the object of the same severity on the part of Innocent XII in 1699. Clement XI, in 1713, deals a final blow to Jansenism by issuing the Bull *Unigenitus*. In 1745, Benedict XIV condemns usury by the Constitution *Vix pervenit*, and the teaching of those who defend dueling by his Bull *Detestabilem* in 1752. The erroneous system contained in the Acts of the Synod of Pistoia published by Scipio de Ricci necessitates the Bull *Auctorem fidei*, hurled with thunderbolts by Pius VI in 1794. Previous to that, this pope had condemned the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, which was founded upon the same principles, in his apostolic letters of March 19, 1792. In our

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times, Gregory XVI, in the Encyclical *Mirari vos* dated August 15, 1832, proscribed the error of religious indifferentism introduced under the form of a false political liberty. On December 8, 1854, Pius IX defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, and ten years later he published the Encyclical *Quanta cura*, with the *Syllabus*, against various erroneous systems which have currency in society today.

There is no doubt, therefore, that the popes have constantly exercised in the Church their right of making definitions in questions of doctrine; and I know of nothing more impressive in history than this series of judgments which testify so eloquently both to the vigilance of the supreme Shepherd and to the confidence with which he has unceasingly fulfilled his duty of confirming his brethren.

Now, how has the Church received these decisions, which have followed one another uninterruptedly from Saint Clement to Pius IX? Has she rejected even one of them? I defy anyone to prove it. Honorius was condemned by the sixth council; but why was he? Was it for having made a wrong judgment? No, it was for having refused to pronounce the judgment which he owed to the Church. Jesus Christ has safeguarded the Roman Pontiff from all error, when he pronounces a judgment; if the pope remains silent, there is nothing to safeguard.

Every time that the apostolic judgment has been pronounced, *the case was closed*. Not that there haven't been recalcitrants; Bishop de Sura knows, as we do, that it has always been possible to find some, even after the decisions of ecumenical councils. When *the case is closed*, it is for the children of the Church that it is closed; heretics do not accept this end of the case, and that is what makes them heretics.

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To say, then, that councils have been held more than once in order to take up again a case already decided by the popes, and to try to draw from this some conclusion against the infallibility of the decisions by the Apostolic See, is to understand nothing of the boundless charity of the Church. What did she mean to accomplish by these councils? To bring about such an impressive testimony to her faith, that the victims of error would be astonished by it, the heresiarchs confounded, so that the truth might triumph with greater splendor.

But – Bishop de Sura will say – in the councils they have examined, weighed the Letters in which the popes have made definitions, and not just limited themselves simply to promulgating them. Our response: Have the councils not scrutinized in the same way the texts of Scripture and the Fathers to elicit from them a formulation of the truth and a condemnation of error? Did they claim thereby to lend authority to the Sacred Scriptures, to the testimonies of the venerable Doctors, or were they simply making sure that their own thought was in conformity with them? Likewise, neither a Saint Celestine nor a Saint Leo, jealous as they were of the prerogatives of their See, ever protested against the conciliar examination of their letters. It never entered the mind of anyone then that a time would come, when theoreticians would imagine the hypothesis of a doctrinal divorce between the pope and the Church. Everyone knew that the Holy See, by right, could render judgments as needed on questions of faith, and that Peter still presided there. Hence the enthusiastic cry in the councils, after a respectful declaration of the meaning of apostolic letters: “Peter has spoken through Leo! Peter has spoken through Agatho!”

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The tradition expressed in the constant practice of the Church with regard to doctrinal definitions issued by the Roman Pontiff is evidence, then, of the belief in his personal infallibility, when he makes pronouncements about the Faith. Let us verify now that the testimony of the Fathers, who are witnesses to tradition in another way, is no less suited to proclaim the gift of infallibility on matters of faith as being an inherent feature of the Chair of Saint Peter.

### *Testimony of the Fathers of the Church in favor of the infallibility of the Roman pontiff*

The statements of the Fathers which we will assemble are not those which have as their precise object the Primacy of Saint Peter and of the Roman pontiff. They are an expression, in the writers from whom they have been taken, of an intimate confidence in the divine assistance granted to the successor of Saint Peter in order to maintain the true faith constantly in his teachings. It follows that the Roman pontiff has the authority to teach, and that the body of the Church has the duty to accept the teaching, because Saint Peter still lives in his successors and exercises in them the prerogative of inerrancy in the Faith, which he owes to the prayer which Jesus Christ made to His Father for him.

We will commence the series of these testimonies with the celebrated passage of Saint Irenaeus, which informs us that, as early as the second century, Christians already knew that the way to tell whether they possessed the true faith was, for the simple faithful as well as for the particular Churches, to seek conformity with the Church of Rome. “To this Church,” says the holy bishop of

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Lyons, “every church, that is to say, the faithful everywhere, must remain united, because of its commanding position; to this Church in which the faithful everywhere have constantly preserved that Tradition which comes from the apostles.”<sup>17</sup> In this passage Saint Irenaeus proclaims the need for every Church and for every believer to be united in faith with the Roman Church, not simply because it in fact guards the Tradition of the teaching of the Apostles, but because it exercises in this regard a “higher principality”, that is to say, that its authority is sovereign in matters of faith. The logical consequence of this doctrine is the infallibility of the See of Rome; otherwise, if this See could err, one would have to say that the faithful are obliged to err with it.<sup>18</sup>

Next comes Origen, the profound doctor of the Christian school of Alexandria. No one has ever scrutinized the Scriptures more, and the earliest tradition comes to light incessantly in his immense commentaries. Having to expound on the text of Saint Matthew where Our Lord says: “Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall

17. Ad hanc enim Ecclesiam propter potiore principalitatem, necesse est omnem convenire Ecclesiam, hoc est eos qui sunt undique fideles: in qua semper ab his qui sunt undique, conservata est ea quae est ab apostolis traditio.” *Adversus Haereses*, Lib. III, cap. iii.

18. Rev. Prof. Döllinger has ventured to say that the meaning of this passage is this: “That the doctrine or the Tradition of the Church of Rome is so well suited to refuting heretics, because the Christians from all parts who meet in this center of the civilized world, each one bringing with him the faith as it has been taught to him in his native land, all contribute toward preserving pure and intact the doctrine of the faith there.” (*Considérations proposées aux Évêques du Concile sur la question de l’infaillibilité du Pape* [Considerations proposed to the Bishops of the council on the question of the infallibility of the pope], page 10.) It suffices to reread the text in order to recognize that this interpretation is as absurd as it is malevolent. Saint Irenaeus is speaking here about an obligation (*necesse est*) which is incumbent upon the whole Church and upon every believer, and not at all about trips to Rome. He says that Rome is the source from which every Church and every believer must

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not prevail against it,” he asks to whom this pronoun, it, refers. “Does it refer,” he says, “to the Rock [Petra] on whom Christ builds the Church? Or to the Church itself? The phrase is ambiguous. Or must we conclude that the Rock and the Church are one and the same thing? I think that the true sense is this: that the gates of hell shall not prevail either against the Rock upon which Christ builds His Church, nor against the Church itself. Just as it is written in the Book of Proverbs, *the way of the serpent upon the rock cannot be discovered*. If therefore the gates of hell prevail against someone, it will be neither against the Rock upon which Christ builds the Church, nor against the Church built by Christ upon the Rock. The Rock is inaccessible to the serpent, it is stronger than the gates of hell which declare war against it, and it is because of its strength that they do not prevail against it. As for the Church, the edifice of Christ, Who has wisely ‘built His house upon a Rock’, she has nothing to fear from the gates of hell. They have power only against the man who is away from the Rock and the Church, but against it they are powerless.”<sup>19</sup>

draw the genuine Tradition of the Apostles, and not that the Church of Rome must borrow this tradition from them. He says, finally, that the reason for the deference which all owe to the Roman Church is a consequence of the *Principality* [or “commanding position”] that it exercises. Fr. Döllinger does not think it appropriate to say a single word about this Principality, the idea of which forms the basis of the whole passage of Saint Irenaeus, who then proceeds to list the popes, from Saint Peter to Saint Eleutherius. The bishops of Rome, according to him, were the depositaries of the apostolic Tradition and the irrefutable witnesses to it, residing in Rome, and they have nothing in common with the supposed travelers of Fr. Döllinger. It is an unhappy age when one can be so bold as to take such liberties and hope, furthermore, to gain a few followers, thanks to the ignorance of the day. Readers who would like a further elaboration on the text of Saint Irenaeus will find it in the learned discussion of Abbot Freppel, *Cours d'Éloquence sacrée* [The Course of Sacred Eloquence], in the volume which he has dedicated to the holy bishop of Lyons.



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It would be difficult to express with greater clarity and force the divine prerogative of the Rock that Jesus Himself has established. The Church rests in safety upon it; for this Rock is sheltered from the attacks of hell. The One Who watches over His Church watches also over the Rock that supports it, and in order to have nothing to fear from Satan, one must not only be in the Church, but also upon the Rock. Who would dare to say, then, that the Rock can fail, this crag upon which the serpent cannot find his way?

Saint Cyprian, with the exception of a momentary eclipse that he suffered, seems to have had a special love for the mysterious character of Unity which shines in the Church, and which is the first of the marks by which she is distinguished from any other society that could call itself Christian. None of the Fathers has insisted more than he upon the prerogative that Jesus Christ conferred upon Peter, to be the foundation of this unity. In the book which he wrote entitled *de Unitate Ecclesiae* [On the Unity of the Church] against the Novatian sect, which would produce a schism and a heresy, he thus summons the rebels to return to the Roman Church: "Someone who does not keep this unity with the Church, does he believe that he is keeping

19. Quam autem eam? An enim Petram, super quam Christus aedificat Ecclesiam? An Ecclesiam? Ambigua quippe locutio est: an quasi unam eandemque rem, Petram et Ecclesiam? Hoc ego verum esse existimo: nec enim adversus Petram, super quam Christus Ecclesiam aedificat, nec adversus Ecclesiam portae inferi praevalerunt. Quemadmodum neque "via colubri super petram," juxta id quod in Proverbiis scriptum est, reperiri possit. Quod si adversus aliquem inferi portae praevalerunt, qui talis erit, neque Petra super quam Christus Ecclesiam aedificat, nec Ecclesia a Christo super Petram aedificata, fuerit. Petra quippe serpenti inaccessa est, et fortior portis inferi sibi adversantibus, adeo ut propter robur illius, portae inferi adversus eam non praevalerent. Ecclesia vero, tanquam Christi aedificium, qui sapienter "aedificavit domum suam super Petram," portarum inferi capax non est, praevalentium quidem adversus quemcumque hominem qui extra Petram et Ecclesiam fuerit, sed invalidarum adversus illam. *In Matthaeum*, Tom. XII, no. 11. *Opp.* Tom. III, Migne, pag. 1003. [Original in Greek.]

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the Faith? Someone who opposes and resists the Church, who abandons the Chair of Peter, upon which the Church is founded, is he assured of being in the Church?"<sup>20</sup> It obviously follows from this principle that the Chair of Peter is infallible; otherwise, there would be cases in which one would have to separate oneself from it. Now, Saint Cyprian teaches us that by separating oneself from the Chair of Peter, one abandons the Church. Further on the holy doctor, while celebrating the mystery of the Church's unity, refers the entire honor thereof to the center from which this unity emanates. "The rays of the sun are many," he says, "but the light is one. The branches of the tree are many, but the trunk is one and founded upon an unshakeable root. And when from one source several streams flow, although their plurality is seen poured out in the breadth of the gushing waters, their unity is nevertheless maintained in their origin. Try to snatch a ray of the sun from its center, unity will not permit a division of the light. Break a branch from the tree, and the broken branch will not be able to put forth leaves. Cut the stream off from its source, and the stream dries up. In the same way the Church, illumined by the light of the Lord, extends its rays through the whole universe; yet there is only one light which is diffused everywhere, and the unity of the body suffers no division. The Church spreads throughout the whole world its branches in fruitful abundance; she spreads far and wide her flowing streams; yet there is one head and one origin, and one mother who is increasingly more prolific. We are born of her womb, we are nourished by her milk, and we are ani-

20. Hanc Ecclesiae unitatem qui non tenet, tenere se fidem credit? Qui Ecclesiae renitur et resistit, qui Cathedram Petri, super quam fundata est Ecclesia, deserit, in Ecclesia se esse confidit? *De unitate Ecclesiae*, cap. iv. [Original in Greek.]

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mated by her spirit.”<sup>21</sup> This magnificent rhetoric, addressed from Africa to the faithful in Rome, in order to fortify them against the devices of Novatian, is no less instructive for posterity. All ages have learned from it that the exuberance of truth and of holiness in the Church proceeds from union with the Roman source, and that if the ray, the branch, the stream of the particular churches were to become isolated, nothing would remain for them but shadows and aridity. The light proceeds from the center; the derivative streams do not ascend the watercourses to bring life to the center that sends it to them.

This immobility of Rome in the truth evoked a feeling of admiration in Saint Gregory of Nazianzen, who too often witnessed incessant variations on the Faith in the East. In one of his most beautiful poems he gives this solemn testimony to it: “Nature did not make two suns, but she produced two Romes; both of them, lights of the whole world: an ancient power and a new power, different only insofar as the one shines upon the East and other upon the West. Yet the beauty of this one, when weighed, is equal to the beauty of the other. As for their faith, Old Rome, from the beginning as also now, runs her proper course, and binds the entire West with its saving doctrine; it is likewise just that she who presides over the entire world, honors in

21. Quomodo solis multi radii, sed lumen unum; et rami arboris multi, sed robur unum tenaci radice fundatum; et cum de fonte uno rivi plurimi defluunt, numerositas licet diffusa videatur exundantis copiae largitate, unitas tamen servatur in origine. Avelle radium solis a corpore, divisionem lucis unitas non capit: ab arbore frange ramum, fractus germinare non poterit: a fonte praecide rivum, praecisus arescit. Sic et Ecclesia, Domini luce perfusa, per orbem totum radios suos porrigit: unum tamen lumen est quod ubique diffunditur, nec unitas corporis separatur. Ramos suos in universam terram copia ubertatis extendit, profluentes largiter rivos latius expandit; unum tamen caput est et origo una, et una mater foecunditatis successibus copiosa. Illius foetu nascimur, illius lacte nutrimur, spiritu ejus animamur. *Ibid.*, cap. v.

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its entirety the harmony which reigns in the divinity.”<sup>22</sup> The holy Doctor alludes to the errors concerning the mystery of the Trinity which divided the East, whereas, under the direction of ancient Rome, the West professed together with her the purity of faith on the ineffable relations among the Divine Persons.

Saint Basil acknowledges the same thing in the letter that he addresses to the Western Church in the midst of the crisis of faith in the East, and he renders the same homage to the ever-pure teachings of the Apostolic See, from which he begs for help. “We feel an immense need,” he says, “for your help, so that those who profess the Apostolic Faith might renounce the divisions that they have invented and might finally submit to the authority of the Church, so that the body of Christ might now be made perfect, in all its members restored to integrity; so that we might no longer be content merely to praise the good which is in others, but might see our own Churches restored to the pristine beauty of the true Faith. In truth, it is right to honor with the highest praise the gift which the Lord has conferred upon Your Piety, which consists of being able to discern what is adulterated from what is upright and pure, and to teach with no alteration whatsoever the Faith of the Fathers. It is this Faith

22. Duos quidem natura non dedit soles,  
Duas at Romas, totius terrarum orbis  
Lumina, antiquam potestatem et novam.  
Tantum inter sese differentes, quantum  
Illa quidem Orienti praelucet, haec autem Occidenti.  
At hujus pulchritudo illius pulchritudinem paribus ponderibus aequat.  
Quod spectat ad illorum fidem, vetus quidem ab antiquo,  
Atque etiam nunc, recte currit, Occidentem  
Totum devinciens salutari doctrina;  
Quemadmodum par est, ut quae universis praesidet,  
Totam colat divinitatis symphoniam.

*Carmen de Vita sua*, v. 562-572. [Original in Greek.]

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which we have received and recognized as being signed and sealed with the *apostolic characters*; and we assent to it and to all the other things which have been canonically and legitimately formulated in your synodal document.”<sup>23</sup> We see here the Eastern Church, in the person of one of her saints, one of her most learned representatives, awarding the West the palm of orthodoxy, recognizing that the Latin Church has received the gift of discerning the truth from error, and that the power of her *apostolic characters* is such that it can help and save from ruin, the Churches of those lands which were the cradle of Christianity. Whence comes this authority of the Roman Council, from which Basil received the synodal letter with so much respect? Is it from the few bishops from Italy and from Gaul whom the bishop of Rome had gathered at his side? Or is it not rather from Saint Peter, whose martyrdom, as Saint Augustine told us a while ago, assured the West, through Rome, of its preponderance in decisions about the Faith?

We shall see more and more, in the course of our citations, the doctors of the East preoccupied with the prerogative of Peter, which they considered, not within the narrow limits of this apostle’s life, but throughout the course of the centuries, as the mainspring of the life of the Church. Let us listen to the sublime deacon of Edessa,

23. Ob quae et maxime indigemus auxilio vestro, ut qui Apostolicam profitentur fidem, excogitata a se schismata dissolventes, deinceps auctoritati Ecclesiae subiciantur, ut perfectum fiat Christi corpus jam in omnibus membris integritati restitutum; ac non solum aliorum bona laudemus, id quod nun facimus, sed etiam nostras ipsorum Ecclesias in pristinum rectae fidei decus restitutas videamus. Revera enim laude summa dignum est, quod a Domino Pietati Vestrae datum est, adulterinum quidem a probo ac puro discernere, Patrum vero fidem sine ulla dissimulatione praedicare: quam quidem et nos suscepimus, agnovimusque Apostolicis notis signatam: eique et caeteris omnibus, quae in synodico scripto canonice et legitime statuta sunt, assentimur. *Epist.* xcii, *Ad Italos et Gallos*. [Original in Greek.]

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Saint Ephrem, who goes back to the Old Testament to find the figure of this Prince of the apostles and the prophesy of his incessant action upon the Church. In his commentary on the book of Josue, he expresses his thoughts in this way: “‘And [Josue] wrote all these things in the volume. . . : and he took a great stone, and set it . . . in the sanctuary of the Lord. And he said to all the people: Behold this stone shall be a testimony unto you, that it hath heard all the words of the Lord, which He hath spoken to you: lest perhaps hereafter you will deny it, and lie to the Lord your God [about all the things that I have spoken in His presence today].’ [Josue 24:26-27]. This great stone which Josue places beneath the Terebinthe in the sanctuary, and which is said to have heard all the words that God had spoken through His interpreter, Josue, was the figure of Simon Peter. For he it is, who heard all the teachings which Christ handed down and who was the witness of His miracles; and he it is who, sharing the labor with the other Apostles, made these same teachings and miracles known to all the nations of the world.”<sup>24</sup> Thus Peter associates his brethren with his activity in the Church. He gives testimony, and this testimony is repeated faithfully by his brethren throughout the universe.

Perhaps someone would like to know more precisely what the role of Peter is in this outpouring of divine light to

24. *Scriptis autem Josue omnia verba haec in volumine, et tulit lapidem praegrandem, posuitque eum in sanctuario Domini, dicens: En lapis iste erit vobis in testimonium, quod audierit verba Domini, quae loquutus est vobis; ne postea negare velitis et mentiri Domino Deo vestro in omnibus, quae ego loquutus sum coram eo hodie.* Lapis praegrandis, qui a Josue subter terebinthum in tabernaculo statuitur, diciturque audivisse omnia verba, quae Deus per interpretem suum Josuam fuerat loquutus, Simonis Petri figura fuit. Hic enim praecepta, quae Christus tradidit, audivit, et miraculorum testis fuit: et utraque, postmodum, communicato cum reliquis Apostolis labore, ad universas per orbem nationes divulgavit. *In Josue*, cap. xxiv. [Original in Greek.]

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all men? Saint Ephrem, again, will tell us. “Hail,” he exclaims, “hail, O salt of the earth, salt that can never lose its savor! Hail, O light of the world, appearing in the East and resplendent everywhere, enlightening those who were oppressed by darkness, and burning brightly without being refilled. This light is Christ; His lampstand is Peter; the oil is the assistance of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>25</sup> Who could better perform the ministry of Peter in the Church! There is only one man who could; but Christ Himself took His place upon him as though upon his lampstand, and the Holy Spirit fuels the ministry by His action.

Another Eastern Father of the Church, Saint Epiphanius, will show us Peter receiving in the Gospel the prerogative of infallibly discerning the truth from error, whenever heresies arise. This is no longer merely Peter confined to the years of his earthly life; this is Peter who shall live forever, and whom Christ has established in truth for the entire duration of the ages. “To Peter, the Father manifests His own Son, and that is why he is called Blessed. Peter in turn manifests the Holy Spirit,<sup>26</sup> as was fitting for him who was the first among the Apostles, for him who is that solid Rock upon which God’s Church is founded, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. By these gates should be understood heresies and the authors of heresies. In every way the Faith is firmly established upon him, who received the keys of heaven and binds and looses on earth and in heaven. In him, indeed, all subtle questions whatso-

25. *Salvete sal terrae, quod nunquam potest evanescere. Salvete lux mundi in oriente manens, et ubique resplendens, illuminans tenebris oppressos, atque absque pabulo ardescens. Lucerna Christus, candelabrum est Petrus, oleum autem subministratio Sancti Spiritus. Encomium in Petrum et Paulum et Andream, etc.* [Original in Greek.]

26. In his Discourse to the Jews on the day of Pentecost.

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ever about the Faith are resolved.”<sup>27</sup>

Returning to the West, we meet the Dalmatian, Saint Jerome writing from Syria to Pope Saint Damasus, to find out which side to take in a lively controversy about the Faith which has arisen at Antioch. Should one say that there are in God three hypostases or one hypostasis only? “Not wishing to follow any other leader but Christ Himself,” he says to the pope, “I remain united in communion with Your Beatitude, that is, with the Chair of Peter. Upon this Rock, I know, the Church is built. Whoever eats the lamb outside of this house is profane. He who is not in Noe’s ark will perish in the waters of the deluge.” A little further on, contrasting the authority of the bishops of Antioch who would have liked to draw him to their way of thinking, he adds: “I am unacquainted with Vitalis, Meletius I reject, I do not know Paulinus. Whoever does not gather with you, scatters; that is, one who does not belong to Christ is of the Antichrist.”<sup>28</sup>

This confidence in the infallible teaching of the Roman Pontiff, which in his obedience he identifies, as we have just seen, with the very Chair of Saint Peter, Saint Jerome expresses later just as clearly in a letter which he

27. Huic (Petro) igitur germanum suum Filium Pater indicat; et beatus idcirco dicitur. At ille ipse rursum Spiritum Sanctum patefecit: sic enim ei qui inter Apostolos primus esset, consentaneum erat, solidae, inquam, illi Petrae, supra quam est Ecclesia Dei fundata, et portae inferi non praevallebunt illi. Quarum portarum nomine haereses et haereseos conditores intelliguntur. Omnibus quippe modis in eo stabilita fides est, qui coeli claves accepit, et in terra solvit et ligat in coelo. In eo siquidem subtiliores quaelibet fidei questiones reperiuntur. *Ancorat*, cap. xi. [Original in Greek.]
28. Ego nullum primum, nisi Christum sequens, Beatitudini tuae, id est, Cathedrae Petri, communione consocior. Super illam Petram aedificatam Ecclesiam scio. Quicumque extra hanc domum agnum comederit, prophanus est. Si quis in Noe arca non fuerit, peribit regnante diluvio.... Non novi Vitalem, Meletium respuo, ignoro Paulinum. Quicumque tecum non colligit, spargit: hoc est, qui Christi non est, Antichristi est. *Epist.* xv, *Ad Damasum*.



## The Papal Monarchy

sends from Bethlehem to the virgin Demetriadis. “When you were still a child,” he says to her, “and Bishop Anastasius of blessed and happy memory governed the Roman Church, a furious tempest of heretics arose from the East and endeavored to soil and destroy the purity of this Faith which was praised by the mouth of the Apostle.<sup>29</sup> But this man, richly endowed with poverty and apostolic solicitude, immediately struck this formidable head and silenced the hissing of the serpent. But because I fear, and already the rumor of it has reached me, that these flattering, poisoned doctrines still live and thrive, I believe that I am obliged to advise you, in my charitable affection, to hold fast to the Faith of (Pope) Saint Innocent who has succeeded him to the apostolic Chair, and not to accept any doctrine that is foreign to it, however prudent and however wise you may seem to yourself. Those whom you must avoid have a habit of murmuring in the corners and of putting on airs of seeking God’s justice.”<sup>30</sup>

Saint Ambrose, in his commentary on Psalm 40 (41), comes to speak of Saint Peter; and it is then that he utters, with respect to the Head of the Apostles, that famous saying which interprets so expressively the meaning of Saint Matthew’s text: “That man is Peter, to whom the Lord said,

29. The faith of the Church of Roman celebrated by Saint Paul in the Epistle to the Romans 1:8.

30. Dum esses parvula, et sanctae ac beatae memoriae Anastasius episcopus Romanam regeret Ecclesiam, de Orientis partibus haeticorum saeva tempestas simplicitatem fidei, quae Apostolici voce laudata est, polluere et labefactare conata est. Sed vir ditissimae paupertatis et Apostolicae sollicitudinis, statim noxium perculit caput, et sibilantia hydrae ora compescuit. Et quia vereor, imo rumore cognovi, in quibusdam adhuc vivere et pullulare venenata blandaria, illud te pio caritatis affectu praemonendam puto, ut sancti Innocentii qui Apostolicae cathedrae successor est, teneas fidem, nec peregrinam, quantumvis tibi prudens callidaque videaris, doctrinam recipias. Solent enim hujusmodi per angulos mussitare, et quasi justitiam Dei quaerere. *Ad Demetriadem, Epist. cxxx.*

## Part II

*Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My Church.* Where Peter is, there is the Church. Where the Church is, there is no death, but life eternal.”<sup>31</sup> Someone who seeks the Church, therefore, has only to find out where Peter is; by finding Peter he will find the Church, which cannot exist without him.

On one occasion when the holy bishop is writing to the emperors, he recommends to them the Roman Church, and he begs them not to oppose it in its ministry by the political measures that they take. “I was obliged to beseech Your Clemency,” he tells them, “not to allow the Roman Church, the head of the entire Roman world, or the sacred and holy Faith of the Apostles to be disturbed; for it is from this Church that the rights of the venerable communion flow for all the others.”<sup>32</sup> There could be no better expression of the importance of the Roman Faith for all the Churches. If they are in communion with one another, it is because they are all united in the Church of Rome. Supposing that it would be necessary to detach oneself from the pope, because he had taught error, then all the Churches would fall down in a heap of ruins, no longer being united by the bond of union.

The sense that the Faith, by divine providence, was unshakeable in the See of Rome, therefore, kept all the Churches united in one communion. In his *Carmen* [Song] about Saint Lawrence, the poet Prudentius, in that same era, nobly celebrated this sublime result in the speech that he has Saint Lawrence make in the midst of the flames: “O

31. Ipse est Petrus cui dixit: *Tu es Petrus, et super hanc Petram aedificabo Ecclesiam meam*. Ubi ergo Petrus, ibi Ecclesia; ubi Ecclesia, ibi nulla mors, sed vita aeterna. *Enarratio in Psalmum XL, cap. xix*. Migne, tom. I, col. 1082.

32. Totius orbis Romani caput Romanam Ecclesiam, atque illam sacrosanctam Apostolorum fidem, ne turbari sineret, obsecranda fuit Clementia vestra; inde enim in omnes venerandae communionis jura dimanant. *Epist. xi, Class. I, Ad Imperatores*.

## The Papal Monarchy

Christ,” the martyr cries, “grant to Thy Romans that their city might be Christian, through which Thou has granted that the other cities might be of one mind in sacred matters. May all the members from far and wide be confederated by the Creed. The subject world is tamed; let the proud capital be tamed as well.”<sup>33</sup> The Roman world, in embracing the Christian Faith, city by city, thus arrived imperceptibly at religious unity, and the Rome of Saint Peter was the center of this new unity. But how could such a completely spiritual confederation have been formed and maintained, unless the center from which it originated had been recognized as having an unchanging Faith?

The idea of Saint Peter continually performing his ministry in the Church becomes more and more clear as one follows the course of tradition. It can be sensed at the heart of the Church from the very beginning, but from one century to the next it becomes accentuated with ever-greater emphasis, as it happens with other dogmas in the course of Tradition. A bishop from the late fourth century, Saint Asterius of Amasea, expresses it with lofty eloquence as follows: “Isaias, prophesying, says truly that the Father has set the Son in place as the Cornerstone, signifying thereby that the entire mass of the world rests upon this

33. Da, Christe, Romanis tuis,  
Sit christiana ut civitas:  
Per quam dedisti, ut ceteris  
Mens una sacrorum foret.

Confoederentur omnia  
Hinc inde membra in symbolum:\*  
Manuescit orbis subditus,  
Manuescat et summum caput.  
*Peri stephanon, In S. Laurentium.*

\*The Greek word *symbolon* in the plural meant “treaty”; later it came to mean the Christian creed. – Translator.

## Part II

foundation as its basis. In turn, the Only-begotten Son says, as it is written in the holy Gospels, that Peter is the foundation of the Church: *Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My Church*. The first of these two, being immense and hard stone, was cast down into the depths of this world, into the valley of tears, so to speak, as David says, bearing all Christians who are built upon it, so that it might lift them on high to the dwelling place for which we hope. No one can lay any other foundation than the one that has been laid, which is Jesus Christ. But our Savior thought it fitting to distinguish the first of His disciples with a similar title, calling him *Peter, the Rock of Faith*. The firm and unchanging stability of the churches is brought about, therefore, through Peter, who has been appointed the *true* and *faithful Doctor* of religion. We Christians, from the rising of the sun to its setting, stand rooted in the building which rests upon this just man.”<sup>34</sup> Who, then, would not be struck by the greatness of Peter? Who would not honor his privilege of being the Rock of the Faith, the *true* and *faithful Doctor* throughout the ages?

Saint Augustine, whom the ages have venerated as the Doctor of Grace, deserves also to be saluted as the Doctor

34. Sane vere Isaias vaticinans ait, posuisse Patrem Filium lapidem angularem: nimirum significans, mundi totam concretionem illo fundamento ac basi nixam esse. Quin et rursum Unigenitus, ut sacris Evangelii libris conscriptum est, Petrum Ecclesiae fundamentum dicit: Tu es Petrus, et super hanc Petram aedificabo Ecclesiam meam. Primus enim revera hic, ut grandis quidam ac durus lapis in mundi hujus cava demissus est, sive in convallem plorationis, quemadmodum David ait, ut christianos omnes supraaedificatos portans in sublime, nempe, ad spei nostrae domicilium subvehat. Fundamentum aliud nemo potest ponere praeter id quod positum est, quod est Christus Jesus. Sed et simili quoque Salvator noster appellatione, primum suum discipulum honestandum duxit, nominans fidei Petram. Per Petrum ergo verum ac fidelem pietatis doctorem effectum, ecclesiarum stabilis inflexaque firmitas consistit. Justi porro aedificatione radicati stamus, qui ab ortu solis ad usque occasum sumus Christiani. *Homilia viii, In SS. Petrum et Paulum*. Migne, page 263.

## The Papal Monarchy

of the Church. No Father has explored in greater depth this subject matter of the Church. His works against the Donatist schism put him in a position to scrutinize, with his genius and his sanctity, the qualities and the prerogatives of this divinely founded society, which is preserved by Christ's promise and the incessant action of the Holy Spirit. No one understood better than Saint Augustine the role of Peter and of his See in the Church, the relation between Unity and Truth in Christianity, and how these two elements should be fused together. This conviction is what inspired him to pronounce that great axiom which should govern everything in a treatise about the Church: "God," he says, "has placed the doctrine of truth in the Chair of Unity."<sup>35</sup>

Then too, how rapturously he accepts Rome's decisions against Pelagianism! We have seen his joy at receiving letters from Saint Innocent I confirming the two councils of Carthage and Mileve; let us listen to him, now that he is in possession of the Decretal of Saint Zosimus against the same errors. Writing to Bishop Optatus, he relates in minute detail the terms of this document as those of a decisive text, and concludes his citation by saying triumphantly: "In these words of the Apostolic See, the Catholic Faith appears, so ancient, so well-founded, with so much certainty and clarity, that it is no longer permissible for a Christian to doubt it."<sup>36</sup>

Saint Augustine has confidence in the Roman Pontiff as the mouthpiece of truth, instituted in that capacity by Jesus Christ Himself in the person of Saint Peter, and he inculcates this confidence in his people by composing for them a

35. (Deus) qui in Cathedra Unitatis doctrinam posuit Veritatis. *Epist.* cv, *Class* II, *Donatistis*, chap. xvi. Edit. reg. tom. II, col. 303.

36. In his verbis Apostolicae Sedis, tam antiqua atque fundata, certa et clara est Catholica fides, ut nefas sit de illa dubitare christiano. *Epist.* cxc, *Class.* III, *ad Optatum*, cap. xxiii. *Ibid.*, col. 707.

## Part II

popular song, in the form of a Psalm, against the Donatists. In it we find the significant verses:

“Come, brethren, if you want to be grafted onto the Vine.

“It is a sorrow for us to see you thus cut off and lying on the ground.

“Number the Bishops from the very Chair of Peter,

“And see who succeeded whom in that order of Fathers:

“It is the very Rock against which the proud gates of hell shall not prevail.”<sup>37</sup>

It follows from the doctrine contained in these verses that the succession of Roman Pontiffs is included in the promise made to Saint Peter. The victory against the gates of hell was promised not only to Saint Peter, but also to the popes. These infernal gates spew forth error, but the privilege of infallibility safeguards Peter and his successors from it.

In this firm doctrine one recognizes the great bishop of Hippo, who provided for all ages the precious formula: *Causa finita est* [The case is closed]. The passages in his writings where he emphasizes the Roman Faith are numerous, but I cannot resist citing this passage from a short work by the holy Doctor which was discovered by the learned Cardinal Mai: “In no way does our heavenly queen (the Church) fear thee, O Arian heresy, thou torturous, perverse cavern, for thou art that miserable daughter of Babylon, that daily comportest thyself so badly that thou art deservedly despised by thy chaste Spouse. Every day thou invadest what belongs to others, and in causing them to perish thou

37. Venite, fratres, si vultis ut inseremini in vite.

Dolor est cum vos videmus praecisos ita jacere.

Numerate Sacerdotes vel ab ipsa Petri sede,

Et in ordine illo Patrum quis cui successit videte:

Ipsa est Petra, quam non vincunt superbae inferorum portae.

*Psalmus contra partem Donati.*

## The Papal Monarchy

lorest as well what is thine own. Thou art known for what thou art, and it is obvious to all what sort of woman thou art. No one believes that thou keepest the true Faith of a Catholic, since thou dost not teach that the Roman Faith is to be preserved. For as far as in thee lies, thou seekest to overturn the Catholic foundations of the very Faith itself.”<sup>38</sup> Thus, not only must the true Church be Roman, but the true Faith must be Roman as well. The Apostolic See is the bond of unity, because it keeps all the faithful in the profession of one and the same Faith, which is her own.

But it is time to hear the Roman Pontiffs themselves give eloquent testimony to this influence of Peter who lives in them, and to the power of these divine promises which vouch for and defend Peter completely unto the consummation of the world. Let it not be said that these popes are judges in their own case;<sup>39</sup> it has been a long time since Bossuet himself declared that they are completely credible, when they expound on the prerogatives of their See. “By the same reasoning,” he says, “they could say that no faith should be put in Bishops or Priests, either, when they proclaim the honor of their own Priesthood. But on the contrary. For God, having bestowed upon certain men a singular prerogative of honor and dignity, also inspires them

38. Non jam te perversa et tortuosa cavea, haeresis ariana, in aliquo formidat nostra coelestis regina; quoniam tu es filia Babylonis misera, quae ad hoc te quotidie male componis, ut a casto Sponso veraciter despiciaris. Ad hoc quotidie invadis aliena, ut cum omnibus simul perdas et propria. Cognosceris jam quae sis, omnibus palam facta es qualis sis. Non crederis veram fidem tenere catholicae, quae fidem non doces esse servandam romanam. Quaeris enim quantum in te est, etiam ipsius fidei catholica fundamenta subvertere. *Serm. xxx, De accedentibus ad gratiam*. Mai, *Nova Patrum Biblioth.*, tom. I, pag. 273.

39. In this way Cardinal de La Luzerne, cited and followed by Bishop de Sura, has not hesitated to charge Saint Leo with *oratorical exaggeration* and even with *error* in what he says about the authority of Saint Peter and of the See of Rome. (See Bishop de Sura, tome II, page 41, and La Luzerne, *Déclaration du Clergé de France*, page 37.)

## Part II

with a true sense of their own authority, so that they might make use of it freely and confidently in the Lord, as the situation demands, and so that Paul's words might be fulfilled: *We have received the Spirit that is of God, that we may know the things that are given us from God* (1 Corinthians 2:12). I considered it appropriate to say this at least once, in order to confound the bold and detestable response that has been made. I profess that, with respect to the majesty of the Apostolic See, I shall adhere to the teaching and Tradition of the Roman Pontiffs; all the more so because they themselves commend their See no more than the others and the entire Church, the Easterners no less than the Westerners.”<sup>40</sup>

We record here, therefore, the testimony of Pope Saint Sixtus III, the predecessor of Saint Leo, who speaks thus in his letter to John of Antioch: “The blessed apostle Peter handed on in his successors what he himself received. Who, then, would want to separate himself from his doctrine, once he has been taught by the master among the Apostles? He [Peter] was not instructed by hearsay or by words read in a book; he, with the others, was taught by the mouth of the Doctor. He underwent no examination as to writings and authors. He received the Faith absolutely and simply, without controversy; this Faith

40. Audio quid dicant: Romanis Pontificibus, Sedis suae dignitatem commendantibus, in propria videlicet cause non esse credendum. Sed absit; pari enim jure dixerint, ne Episcopis quidem, aut Presbyteris esse adhibendam fidem, cum Sacerdotii sui honorem praedicant; quod contra est. Nam quibus Deus singularem honoris dignitatisque praerogativam contulit, iisdem inspirat verum de sua potestate sensum; ut ea in Domino, cum res poposcerit, libere et confidenter utantur, fiatque illud quod ait Paulus: *Accipimus spiritum qui ex Deo est, ut sciamus quae a Deo donata sunt nobis* (1 Corinth. 2:12). Quod quidem hic semel dicere placuit, ut temerariam ac pessimam responsionem confutarem; profiteorque me de Sedis Apostolicae maiestate, Romanorum Pontificum doctrinae et traditioni crediturum: quanquam eorum Sedem non ipsi magis, quam reliqui, ac tota Ecclesia, atque Orientales haud minus quam Occidentales praedicant. *Defensio Declarationis Cleri Gallicani*, lib. X, cap. vi.



## The Papal Monarchy

which we must meditate upon unceasingly and in which we must abide, so that by following the apostles in the purity of our thinking, we might merit a place among the apostolic men. This is no light burden for us, this is no small task, to preserve the Church of the Lord from every spot and wrinkle.”<sup>41</sup>

But it is time to hear the great Saint Leo: here is what he proclaims from the height of his apostolic throne: “Therefore whatever Truth disposes is permanent, and Blessed Peter, persevering in the strength of the Rock which he has received, has not relinquished the rudder of the Church since taking it up. Now he accomplishes more fully and more powerfully the things that were entrusted to him, and he fulfills all the various offices and duties in Him and with Him, by Whom he was glorified. And so, if we do anything right, or discern anything correctly, if anything is obtained from God’s mercy by our daily supplications, it is the work and the merit of him whose power lives in his See and whose authority is pre-eminent.”<sup>42</sup>

Then, alluding to the yearly solemn anniversary of his elevation to the See of Rome, the eloquent Pontiff contin-

41. Beatus Petrus apostolus in successoribus suis, quod accepit, hoc tradidit. Quis ab ejus se velit separare doctrina, quem ipse inter Apostolos primum magister edocuit? Non hunc auditus per alterum, non sermo lectus instruxit: doctus est cum aliis ore Doctoris. Non scripturae, non scriptorum passus est quaestionem: absolutam et simplicem fidem, et quae controversiam non haberet, accepit: quam utique meditari semper, et in qua manere debemus: ut sensu puro sequentes Apostolos, inter apostolicos esse mereamur. Non parum nobis oneris, non parum laboris incumbit, ut Ecclesiae Domini macula desit et ruga. – D. Coustant, *Epist. Romanorum Pontificum*, tome I, col. 1260.

42. Manet ergo dispositio veritatis, et Beatus Petrus in accepta fortitudine Petrae perseverans, suscepta Ecclesiae gubernacula non reliquit. Qui nunc plenius et potentius ea quae sibi commissa sunt peragit, et omnes partes officiorum atque curarum in ipso et cum ipso, per quem est glorificatus, exsequitur. Si quid itaque a nobis recte agitur, recteque discernitur, si quid a misericordia Dei quotidianis supplicationibus obtinetur, illius est operum atque meritorum, cujus in Sede sua vivit potestas, et excellit auctoritas. *In anniversario Assumptionis suae*, serm. III.

## Part II

ues as follows: “And so in this way, beloved brethren, you will fittingly celebrate today’s festival, so that in my humble person you may recognize and honor him, in whom continues the care of all pastors and the safe-keeping of all the sheep entrusted to him, whose dignity does not fail, even in an unworthy heir.”<sup>43</sup> Having read that, who would dare to believe the pope fallible in his solemn teaching, when we hear the infallible and enduring voice of Peter resounding in his judgments?

No one should be surprised, then, to see another Doctor, Saint Peter Chrysologus, writing to the here-siarch Eutyches, who had tried to establish connections with him, and advising him to turn to Saint Peter, whose voice always reaches the ears of the faithful, when they desire to hear it. “In all matters,” the holy bishop tells him, “we exhort you, honorable brother, to pay attention and render obedience to what has been written by the most blessed pope of the city of Rome; for Blessed Peter, who lives in his own See and presides upon that Chair, manifests the truth of the Faith to those who seek it. In the interests of preserving peace and the Faith, we cannot hear [such] cases without the consent of the bisop of the city of Rome.”<sup>44</sup>

In a letter to the emperor Zeno, Pope Saint Simplicius announces to that ruler that he is sending him the letters of

43. His itaque modis, dilectissimi, rationabili obsequio celebratur hodierna festivitas, ut in persona humilitatis meae ille intelligatur ille honoretur, in quo et omnium pastorum sollicitudo, cum commendatorum sibi ovium custodia perseverat, et cujus dignitas etiam in indigno haerede non deficit. *Ibid.*

44. In omnibus autem hortamur te, frater honorabilis, ut his quae a beatissimo Papa Romanae civitatis scripta sunt, obedienter attendas: quoniam B. Petrus, qui in propria Sede vivit, et praesidet, praestat quaerentibus fidei veritatem. Nos enim pro studio pacis et fidei, extra consensum Romanae civitatis episcopi causas audire non possumus. *Epist. ad Eutychetem*. Migne, p. 23.

## The Papal Monarchy

his predecessors against the Monophysite heresy. He adds: "This very same rule of apostolic teaching is permanent in the successors of him, to whom the Lord enjoined the care of the entire sheepfold, to whom He promised that He would never fail him, until the end of the world, and that the gates of hell would never prevail against him; and He declared that the things bound on earth by his judgment could not be loosed, not even in heaven."<sup>45</sup>

Saint Gelasius, successor of Simplicius, teaches no differently. In a Decretal addressed to the Greeks, he expresses himself as follows: "Certainly, there were twelve Apostles, girded with equal merits and equal dignity; and although all shone with the same spiritual light, Christ nevertheless willed that one of them should be the prince, and by a marvelous dispensation, He guided him to Rome, the Mistress of the nations, so that in the first and chief city He might direct Peter, the first and chief apostle. And in that capital, just as Peter was distinguished by the sublime power of his doctrine, he also had the honor of gloriously shedding his blood. There he has his eternal resting place, securing for the See which he himself blessed that, according to the Lord's promise, it will never be conquered by the gates of hell, and will be the safest port for all who are tossed by the waves. Whoever finds rest therein will enjoy a blessed and everlasting abode; whoever despises it will have to see for himself what sorts of excuses he will offer on the day of judgment."<sup>46</sup>

45. Perstat enim in successoribus suis haec et eadem Apostolicae norma doctrinae, cui Dominus totius curam ovilis injunxit, cui se usque ad finem saeculi minime defuturum, cui portas inferi nunquam praevalituras esse promisit, cujus sententia quae ligarentur in terris, solvi testatus est non posse nec in coelo. *Epist. iv, Ad Zenonem*.  
Labbé, tom. IV, col. 1071.

## Part II

Saint Gregory the Great is no less precise concerning the authority which his union with the apostle Peter confers upon the decisions of the Roman Pontiff, in matters of Faith, when he writes these words to the bishops of Gaul. “But if some dispute should arise – which may Almighty God forbid – concerning a question about the Faith, or if some business should come up which might cause great uncertainty and require the judgment of the apostolic see on account of its importance; after a diligent examination of the matter, let it be brought to our attention by a written report [*relatio*], since it ought to be settled by us through an appropriate decision that will dispel all doubt.”<sup>47</sup>

Such, then, was the constant teaching of the Roman Pontiffs, and we see that they did not fail to inculcate it as the opportunity arose. Even before the pontificate of Saint Leo, as early as the Council of Ephesus, Philip, the legate of Saint Celestine, expressed himself with this precision, which surprised no one. Together with his colleagues he was the bearer of the pope’s second letter to the council. When this letter had been read in the second session, he took the floor and spoke freely:

46. Duodecim certe fuere Apostoli, paribus meritis parique dignitate suffulti: cumque omnes aequaliter spirituali luce fulgerent, unum tamen principem esse ex illis voluit Christus, eumque dispensatione mirabili in Dominam gentium Romam direxit, ut in praecipue urbe vel prima primum et praecipuum dirigeret Petrum. Ibiq; sicut doctrinae virtute sublimis emicuit, ita sanguinis gloriosa effusione decoratus, aeterno hospitio conquiescit, praestans Sedi, quam ipse benedixit, ut a portis inferi nunquam pro Domini promissione vincatur, omniumque sit fluctuantium tutissimus portus. In quo qui requieverit, beata et aeterna statione gaudebit: qui vero contempserit, ipse videbit qualia genera excusationum in die obtendat iudicii. *Epist. xiv, De responsione ad Graecos*. Migne, p. 90.
47. Si quam vero contentionem, quod longe faciat divina potentia, de fidei causa evenire contigerit, aut negotium emerit, cuius vehemens sit fortasse dubietas, et pro sui magnitudine iudicio sedis apostolicae indigeat: examinata diligentius veritate, relatione sua ad nostram studeat perducere notionem: quatenus a nobis valeat congrua sine dubio sententia terminari. Lib. V, *Epist. liv, Ad Galliae episcopos*. Edit. Galliccioli, tom. VII.

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“We give thanks to the holy and venerable council that, after the letter of our holy and blessed pope was read to you, you united your holy members to your holy Head by your holy voices and also your holy acclamations. For Your Beatitude is aware that the blessed apostle Peter is the head of the entire Faith and also of the Apostles.”<sup>48</sup>

Theodotus, bishop of Ancyra, replied in the name of the council: “The God of all creation, through the letters of the most-religious Bishop Celestine which have been brought here, and by the arrival of Your Piety, has demonstrated that the decision of this holy Synod is just.”<sup>49</sup> At its first session, the council had proceeded to depose Nestorius, against whom the pope had already pronounced judgment. The legates, detained at sea, had not yet arrived; but the first letters of the pope had been so strong that the council used the following language in its decree of deposition: “Compelled by the sacred Canons and the letter of our Most Holy Father and fellow minister Celestine, bishop of the Roman Church, quite bathed in tears, we necessarily come to this lugubrious decision against Nestorius.”<sup>50</sup>

Going back a little earlier in the fifth century, we find the learned Theodoret, bishop of Cyrrhus, who testifies in these terms, in his letter to Renatus, a priest of the Roman

48. Gratias agimus Sanctae venerandaeque Synodo, quod litteris sancti beatique Papae nostri vobis recitatis, sancta membra sanctis vestris vocibus, sancto Capiti, sanctis etiam vestris exclamationibus, vos adjunxeritis. Non enim ignorat vestra Beatitudo, totius fidei, vel etiam Apostolorum caput esses beatum apostolum Petrum. – Labbé, tom. III, col. 619.

49. Theodotus Ancyrae episcopus dixit: Justam esse sanctae Synodi sententiam demonstravit universorum Deus per litteras Coelestini religiosissimi Episcopi huc allatas, et per vestrae Pietatis adventum. – Labbé, tom. III, col. 619.

50. Coacti per sacros Canones et epistolam Sanctissimi Patris nostri et comministri Coelestini Romanae Ecclesiae episcopi, lacrymis subinde perfusi, ad lugubrem hanc contra eum sententiam necessario venimus. *Ibid.*, col. 533.

## Part II

Church, to the idea that he was forming of the Apostolic See with respect to teaching the Faith: “This Most Holy See,” he says, “has principality over the Churches located throughout the world and many reasons for this claim, but above all because it has never been stained by heresy, and no one of heterodox belief has sat there, and because it has preserved the apostolic grace in its integrity. The things which you shall have decided, whatever they may be, we agree to, confident in the equity of your judgment, and we ask that the decision be put in writing.”<sup>51</sup>

The following century, on the coast of Africa, Saint Fulgentius, bishop of Ruspe, rendered this magnificent testimonial to the teaching of the Apostolic See: “Everything held and taught by the Roman Church, which is the summit of the world, enlightened by the teaching of the two great luminaries, Peter and Paul as though by resplendent rays, and adorned by their sacred relics, the entire Christian world also unhesitatingly believes *with her* unto justice and unwaveringly professes unto salvation.”<sup>52</sup>

Saint Isidore of Seville hands on to us the tradition of the Churches of Spain, when he fearlessly states that whoever opposes the decisions of the Roman Pontiff *ipso facto* incurs the reproach of heresy: “We know that we are bishops in Christ’s Church, and in that capacity we profess that

51. Habet enim Sanctissima illa Sedes Ecclesiarum quae in toto sunt orbe principatum multis nominibus, atque hoc ante omnia, quod ab haeretica labe immunis mansit, nec ullus contraria sentiens in illa sedit, sed apostolicam gratiam integram conservavit. Quae a vobis fuerint iudicata, in his, qualiacumque ea erunt, iudicii vestri aequitati confidentes acquiescemus: et rogamus ut iudicium ex scriptis constituatur. Tom. IV, p. 1323, *Epist.* cxvi, *ad Renatum presbyterum*. Édit. Migne.
52. Quod duorum magnorum luminarium, Petri scilicet Paulique, verbis, tanquam splendentibus radiis illustrata, eorumque decorata corporibus, Romana quae mundi cacumen est tenet et docet Ecclesia, totusque cum ea christianus orbis, et ad justitiam nihil haesitans credit, et ad salutem non dubitat confiteri. *Epist.* xvii. Migne, page 466.

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we are more especially obliged than the other prelates of the Church to render to the Roman Pontiff, with reverence, humility and devotion, the obedience which is due him in all things as the Vicar of Christ. Anyone who shamelessly opposes him, we declare to be a heretic, excluded entirely from the communion of the faithful. Indeed, we do not say this by our own free choice; rather it is by the authority of the Holy Spirit that we consider it reliable and believe and maintain that it is valid.”<sup>53</sup>

Once the Monothelite heresy had arisen in the East, and the weakness of Honorius had silenced the Roman chair for a moment, the eagerness of the Churches to consult the apostolic spokesman only became more ardent. We find during the pontificate of Saint Theodore, the third successor of Honorius, a letter addressed to this Pontiff, in the name of the three councils of the Church of Africa, in which Columbus, Metropolitan of Numidia, Stephen, Metropolitan of Byzacium, and Reparatus, Metropolitan of Mauretania, request a decision by the pope on questions that the patriarchs Pyrrhus and Paul scandalously raised at Constantinople concerning the two wills in Jesus Christ. They have recourse to the pope as to the one who is competent to determine doctrine and to put an end to controversies. Here is the language that they use:

“No one can dispute that in the Apostolic See there is a great and ever-flowing fountain providing water in plenty for all Christians. The abundant streams that proceed from this fountain copiously irrigate the entire Christian

53. Sic nos scimus praeesse Ecclesiae Christi, quatenus romano Pontifici reventer, humiliter, et devote, tanquam Dei Vicario, prae caeteris Ecclesiae praelatis specialius nos fateamur debitam in omnibus obedientiam exhibere. Contra quod quemquam procaciter venientem, tanquam haereticum, a consortio fidelium omnino decernimus alienum. Hoc vero non ex electione proprii arbitrii, sed potius auctoritate Spiritus Sancti habemus firmum, ratumque credimus, et tenemus. *Epist. ad Claudium ducem*. Opp., tom. VI, page 567.

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world. In honor of blessed Peter, the decrees of the Fathers have prescribed a particular reverence which all must show toward this fountain in investigating the things of God, which must be examined thoroughly and solicitously, but most especially with justice by that same apostolic summit of all the prelates, whose responsibility from antiquity has been both to condemn what is evil and to approve what is praiseworthy. The ancient rules decree that any question whatsoever which arises in remote or far-flung provinces cannot be discussed or decided until it has been brought to the attention of your august See, so that it might be confirmed by the authority thereof, according to the pronouncement that it issues, and so that the other Churches may draw therefrom, as from their native source, the principle of their teaching, and the Mysteries of salvation may thus preserve the incorruptible purity of the Faith through the various regions of the whole world.”<sup>54</sup>

At the same time that the Churches of Africa testify in this way to their confidence in the infallible teaching of the successor of Peter, the East was having recourse to the same Pope Theodore through the spokesman Sergius, Metropolitan of Cyprus, and in this manner affirmed its

54. *Magnum et indeficientem omnibus christianis fluentia redundantem, apud Apostolicam Sedem consistere fontem nullus ambigere possit, de quo rivuli prodeunt affluenter, universum largissime irrigantes orbem Christianorum, cui etiam in honore beatissimi Petri Patrum decreta peculiarem omnem decrevere reverentiam in requirendis Dei rebus, quae omnino et sollicite debent, maxime vero justequè ab ipso praesulum examinari vertice Apostolico, cujus vetusta sollicitudo est tam mala damnare, quam probare laudanda. Antiquis enim regulis sancitum est, ut quidquid quamvis in remotis vel in longinquo positus ageretur provinciis, non prius tractandum vel accipiendum sit, nisi ad notitiam almae Sedis vestrae fuisset deductum, ut hujus auctoritate, juxta quae fuisset pronuntiatio firmaretur, indeque sumerent ceterae Ecclesiae velut de natali suo fonte praedicationis exordium, et per diversas totius mundi regiones puritatis incorruptae maneant fidei Sacramenta salutis.* – Labbé, tom. VI, col. 128.



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confidence in the divine certitude of the apostolic oracle. “Christ our God has established your Apostolic See, O sacred summit, as a divinely-appointed and immovable firmament, and as the most glorious charter of faith. For you are, as the divine Word declares, Peter, and the columns of the Church are set firmly upon your foundation. He also entrusted to you the keys of heaven and declared that yours is the power to bind and loose the things that are on earth and in heaven. As the prince and doctor of the orthodox and immaculate Faith, you are the destroyer of profane heresies. Therefore do not, O Father, despise the Faith of our Fathers, which is agitated, buffeted and even endangered by certain heretical winds, Dispel the clouds of the foolish by the light of your divine knowledge, O Most Holy One. Cut off the blasphemies and the boasting of those who speak empty words, and of the heretical doctors who have recently appeared. For your orthodox and apostolic definition, and Tradition are all that is needed to produce in us an increase in faith.”<sup>55</sup>

Pope Saint Theodore condemned the two patriarchs who had denounced him through the three African metropolitans and branded as heretical the Monothelite formula known as the *Type of* [the Emperor Constans II]. He was replaced in the

55. Firmamentum a Deo fixum et immobile, atque tituli formam lucidissimam fidei vestram apostolicam Sedem constituit, o sacer vertex, Christus Deus noster. Tu es enim, sicut divinum veraciter pronuntiat Verbum, Petrus, et super fundamentum tuum Ecclesiae columnae confirmatae sunt: tibi et claves coelorum commisit, atque ligare et solvere potestative, quae in terra et in coelis sunt, promulgavit. Tu profanarum haeresaeum depositor existis, ut princeps et doctor orthodoxae et immaculatae fidei. Igitur non despicias Patrum nostrorum, Pater, fidem aestuantem, et ab aliquibus haereticis ventis violentatam, necnon periclitantem: resolve nebulam insipientium lumine tuae divinae scientiae, o Sanctissime. Abscinde blasphemias et jactantiam vaniloquorum, et noviter emergentium haereticorum doctorum. Nihil etenim minus est orthodoxae et Apostolicae vestrae definitioni atque traditioni, quatenus augmentum aliquod suscipiat a nobis fides. – Labbé, tom. VI, col. 121.

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See of Rome by Saint Martin I, who won the palm of martyrdom in his battle against the new heresy. In the Lateran Basilica he held a famous council, in which various letters were read from bishops who set great store by this assembly, hoping for the formal condemnation of Monothelitism. These letters are included in the Acts themselves of the council, since they figure in its various sessions. All of them profess faith in the infallibility of the judgments of the successor of Peter. I will limit myself to quoting the one by Stephen, bishop of Dora. Here are a few lines from it:

“Having taken the wings of the dove, as David says, let us fly and announce the situation to this See, which is set before all, to your sovereign and principal See, I say, to which we come for the customary remedy for our wound. To be sure, this See has been accustomed to do this from of old, being empowered [*potestative*] by its apostolic and canonical authority. By the plain meaning of Scripture, not only were the keys of the kingdom of heaven entrusted to Peter, great in his profession of the truth and the prince of the apostles, who merited them only so as to open the kingdom worthily to the faithful, and certainly not to close up the just rewards of those who believe in the Gospel of grace; but he is also commanded to be the first to feed the sheep of the Catholic Church, when the Lord says: *Peter, dost thou love Me? Feed My sheep*. Furthermore he, chiefly and especially having an exceedingly firm and unchangeable faith in the Lord our God, merited to convert and confirm his spiritual brethren, when they were shaken, given that he received, in stewardship [*dispensative*], Priestly power and authority over all the others from God Himself Who became incarnate for our sakes.”<sup>56</sup>

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Stephen then relates how Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, seeing the progress of this heresy, had brought him – the bishop of the first see within his jurisdiction – to Calvary, and there had enjoined him to leave immediately for Rome, while speaking to him these moving words: “You will render an accounting to Him Who, being God, was willingly crucified according to the flesh for our sakes in this holy place, when on the day of His terrible coming in glory He shall judge the living and the dead, if you delay and neglect the interests of His Faith, which is imperiled. You know that I cannot do it bodily, being prevented by the Saracen incursion that has taken place because of our sins. Set out, therefore, as soon as possible, from the ends of the earth to its furthest limits, until you reach the Apostolic See, *where the foundations of orthodox dogmas are found*.”<sup>57</sup>

Such was the Faith of the East in the See of Rome and in its inviolable fidelity. We find many other testimonies to

56. Aliquando autem (assumentes) pennas columbae, secundum beatum David, volumus et annuntiemus haec omnia omnium propositae Sedi, dico autem summae vestrae et principali, ad medicinale consuetum emersi vulneris. Quippe quoniam hoc potestative olim et ab antiquitus facere, per Apostolicam sive canonicam consuevit Auctoritatem, dum aperta lucubratione non solum claves regni coelorum creditae sunt ei, atque ipse tantummodo ad aperiendum eas fidelibus quidem digne, minime autem Evangelio gratiae credentibus iusta claudere, magnus secundum veritatem, et princeps apostolorum meruit Petrus: sed etiam et pascere primus iussus est oves catholicae Ecclesiae, cum Dominus dicit: *Petre, amas me? Pasce oves meas*. Et iterum ipse praecipue ac specialiter firmam prae omnibus habens in Dominum Deum nostrum et immutabilem fidem, convertere aliquando et confirmare exagitatatos consortes suos et spirituales meruit Fratres, utpote dispensative super omnes ab ipso qui propter nos incarnatus est Deus, potestatem accipiens et Sacerdotalem auctoritatem. – Labbé, tom. VI, col. 101.
57. Tu dabis rationem ipsi, qui propter nos secundum carnem in hoc sancto loco sponte crucifixus est Deus, quando enim cum gloria in terribili ejus adventu judicaturus est vivos et mortuos, si distuleris et postposueris fidem ejus periclitantem. Licet ego hoc facere corporaliter, ut nosti, propter emersam ex nostris peccatis incursionem Saracenorum praepedior. Quantocius ergo de finibus terrae ad terminos ejus deambula, donec ad Apostolicam Sedem, ubi orthodoxorum dogmatum fundamenta existunt. – Labbé, tom. VI, col. 104.

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it in the writings of Saint Maximus, Abbot of Chrysopolis, the most famous opponent of Monothelitism. I will limit myself to citing this passage. “All the ends of the earth, and all those who, in whatever place, profess the Lord with a true and upright faith, have their eyes fixed upon the most holy Roman Church, upon her confession and upon her right faith, as though upon the sun of eternal light. Their gaze awaits from her the dazzling radiance of the doctrine of the saintly Fathers, as it has been expounded in all sincerity and piety by the six holy and divinely-inspired councils, which have produced with the utmost clarity the Symbol of faith [i.e. the Creed]. Indeed, from the beginning, when the Word of God came down to us, having taken on our flesh, all the Churches of Christians everywhere have had, as their unique basis and firm foundation, this great Church, against which, according to the Savior’s own promise, the gates of hell would by no means prevail. She it is who holds the keys of the correct faith in Him and of the true profession [of that faith]. She it is who opens the one true religion to those who approach her with suitable piety; but she closes and obstructs every heretical mouth that speaks injustice against the Most-High.”<sup>58</sup>

After Saint Agatho was elevated to the Holy See, the

58. Omnes enim orbis terrarum fines, et qui ubique gentium Dominum vere rectaque fide confitentur, velut in solem sempiternae lucis in sanctissimam Romanam Ecclesiam, ejusque confessionem ac fidem rectam intortis oculis respiciunt, ex ipsa effulgurans exspectantes jubar, Patrum doctrinae sanctorumque, prout sincere omnique pietate, Numine afflatae atque divinae sanctae sex Synodi exposuere, explicatissime fidei symbolum edentes. Ab initio enim, quando ad nos Dei Verbum assumpto carne descendit, unicam firmam basim ac fundamentum, omnes ubique Christianorum Ecclesiae, quae ibi est, maximam nacti sunt, habentque Ecclesiam; ut in quam, juxta ipsam Salvatoris promissionem, portae inferi haudquaquam praevaluerint, sed quae rectae fidei in ipsum ac confessionis claves habeat, hisque, qui cum pietate accedant, quae vere natura est, solamque pietatem aperiat; claudat vero atque obstruat omne os haereticorum, injustitiam loquens in Excelso. *Opuscula theologica et polemica*. Édit. Migne, tom. II, pag. 138.

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cause of Monothelitism, which had been settled in the Lateran Council, had to be dealt with again in an ecumenical council; not that any doubt had remained as to the true faith, but in order to confound with even more emphasis a heresy which numbered so many initiates in the East. The pope agreed promptly to this plan, for nobody in the Church then had the slightest notion of the scholastic discussions which, so many centuries later, would arise concerning the respective superiority of the pope or of the council. One took quite naturally the measures which seemed most appropriate in order to destroy heresy and to bring about the victory of the true faith. The Monothelites were heretics before the Sixth Council just as the Arians were before the Council of Nicea; but it was fitting for the Church to make her great voice heard against the one group and the other, so as to intimidate error and to make an impression on those whose enthusiasm would have led them to perdition and whom the solemn anathemas of a council might still move.

The Roman Pontiff wrote to the emperors and to the council that opened in Constantinople two dogmatic letters, which prompted the council to exclaim: "*Peter has spoken through Agatho!*" In his missives the pope spoke of the authority of his See in the accents of his predecessors; I will quote just one passage: "Blessed Peter gave the apostolic doctrine to the apostles, not that it might be placed under a bushel basket, but so that it might be preached throughout the world like a trumpet blast. This is because his true profession of faith was revealed from heaven by the Father, on which occasion Peter was pronounced blessed by the Lord of all. He also received from the Redeemer of all mankind Himself, by a threefold command, the duty of feeding the spiritual sheep of the Church. By his diligent protection,

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this apostolic Church of His has never strayed from the way of truth into any sort of error. The entire Catholic Church of Christ and all the councils have always embraced his authority faithfully and followed it in all things, as being the authority of the Prince of all the apostles. All the venerable Fathers embraced his apostolic doctrine, through which they have become illustrious as the most excellent luminaries of Christ's Church. And the holy orthodox doctors revered and followed this doctrine, while the heretics have attacked it with their false accusations and spitefully rejected it. This doctrine is the living Tradition of Christ's apostles, which His Church preserves everywhere, which must be especially loved and promoted and confidently preached, which unites believers to God by a true profession and makes them commendable to Christ our Lord.

“This doctrine is indeed the rule of the true faith, which has been vigorously preserved and defended in prosperity and in adversity by this spiritual mother, the Apostolic Church of Christ. It can be demonstrated that, by the grace of God Almighty, this Church has never strayed from the path of apostolic Tradition, nor been corrupted by succumbing to heretical novelties. Rather, just as from the very beginning of the Christian faith she has learned from her authorities [*auctores*], the princes of Christ's apostles, so she shall remain unspotted to the end, according to the divine promise of our Lord and Savior Himself, which He spoke to the first of His disciples in the holy Gospels, saying: *Peter, Peter, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not. And thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren.* Consider, then, how the Lord and savior of all mankind, Who is trustworthy, and Who promised that Peter's faith

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would not fail, admonished him to confirm his brothers.”<sup>59</sup>

The council, as we know, did not limit itself to formulating the faith concerning the two wills, in keeping with the letters of the Roman Pontiff. It anathematized the heretics Sergius, Pyrrhus, and Paulus, and it even extended this anathema to the unfortunate Honorius as the one who had abetted the aforementioned by his silence; but let no one believe that, through this act of extreme severity, the council in any way detracted from the principle set forth above by Saint Agatho, regarding the Roman Church as the inviolable center of the faith. Saint Agatho departed from this world toward the end of the council, and Saint Leo II replaced him upon the Holy See; hence we have, in the Acts, the letter which the emperor, Constantine [IV]

59. Apostolicam doctrinam beatus Petrus apostolis tradidit; ut non sub modio condatur, sed tuba clarius in toto orbe praedicetur: quia ejus vera confessio a Patre de coelis est revelata; in qua a Domino omnium beatus esse pronuntiatus est Petrus. Qui et spirituales oves Ecclesiae ab ipso Redemptore omnium, terna commendatione, pasceudas suscepit: cujus annitente praesidio, haec apostolica ejus Ecclesia nunquam a via veritatis in qualibet erroris parte deflexa est; cujus auctoritatem, utpote apostolorum omnium Principis, semper omnis catholica Christi Ecclesia et universales Synodi fideliter amplectentes, in cunctis secutae sunt: omnesque venerabiles Patres apostolicam ejus doctrinam amplexi, per quam et probatissima Ecclesiae Christi luminaria claruerunt. Et sancti quidem doctores orthodoxi venerati atque secuti sunt; haeretici autem falsis criminationibus ac derogationum odiis insecuti. Haec est apostolorum Christi viva traditio, quam ubique ejus tenet Ecclesia: quae praecipue diligenda atque fovenda et fiducialiter praedicanda est: quae per veridicam confessionem Deo conciliat, quae et Christo Domino commendabilem facit. Haec est enim verae fidei regula, quam et in prosperis et in adversis vivaciter tenuit ac defendit haec spiritalis mater, apostolica Christi Ecclesia. Quae, per Dei omnipotentis gratiam, a tramite apostolicae traditionis nunquam errasse demonstratur, nec haereticis novitatibus depravata succubuit: sed ut, ab exordio fidei christianae, percepit ab auctoribus suis, apostolorum Christi principibus, illibata fine tenus permanet; secundum ipsius Domini salvatoris divinam pollicitationem, quam suorum discipulorum principi in sacris Evangeliiis fatus est: *Petre, Petre*, inquit, *ecce Satan expetivit ut cribraret vos, sicut qui cribrat triticum. Ego autem pro te rogaui, ut non deficiat fides tua. Et tu aliquando conversus, confirma fratres tuos*. Considerate itaque quoniam Dominus et salvator omnium, cujus fides est, qui fidem Petri non defecturam promisit, confirmare eum fratres suos admonuit. – Labbé, tome VI, pag. 636.

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Pogonatus (who had attended all the sessions) wrote to the latter pope in the name of the council, to inform him of everything that had taken place. The ruler expresses as follows the council's attitude towards the dogmatic letters of Saint Agatho: "We had, as though before our minds' eyes, the Prince himself of the apostolic choir and Pontiff of the first See, Peter, explaining by divine inspiration the mystery of the work of salvation, and saying once more to Christ, by these letters: *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God!* For his sacred letters, with their explanations, expressed for us the whole Christ. We accepted them all with joyful and sincere hearts, as though we had received Peter himself in the arms of our intellect. Only one abandoned us, to go over to those with whom he perished: Macarius, who despite his name is not "happy". He was the ordinary of the city of Antioch. By his rebellion he threw off the yoke of Christ, and left the assembly of bishops; for he absolutely refused to assent to the most sacred letters of Agatho, as though raging against Peter, the prince and coryphaeus [leader of the choir]."<sup>60</sup> We read further on:

"For the law went out from Sion, doctrine descended from the summit of the apostolic mountain. Therefore the holy and universal council stripped the madman Macarius, together with his companions in heresy, of their pontifical vestments. All the bishops, by a common written request, have

60. Ac veluti ipsum principem Apostolici chori, primaeque cathedrae antistitem Petrum, contuiti sumus mentium nostrarum oculis, totius dispensationis mysterium divinitus loquentem, verbaque haec per eas litteras Christo facientem: *Tu es Christus filius Dei vivi*. Nam ipsum totum Christum nobis sacrae ejus litterae disserendo exprimebant; quas omnes libentibus animis sincerisque accepimus, et veluti Petrum ipsum ulnis animi suscepimus. Solus autem cum iis quibuscum abreptus est, defecit a nobis Macarius, qui pro suo nomine felix non est, is qui Antiochensium urbis praesul fuit, et ab jugo Christi se adversando subduxit, a sacerdotali vero conventu exiliit; renuit enim omnino sacratissimis Agathonis litteris assentiri, veluti in ipsum corypheum ac principem Petrum insaniens. – Labbé, tome VI, [col.] 1101.



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asked Our Serenity to deliver them up to Your Beatitude. Therefore we have done so, and have sent them to you, ceding their case in its entirety to Your paternal judgment.”<sup>61</sup>

Thus the letters of Saint Agatho soared so high above the council, that the grounds set forth by the imperial letter – a letter written in the name of this holy assembly – the motive that it had had for deposing the patriarch of Antioch, was that that bishop refused to accept these letters which came from Rome. The council which had anathematized the heretics referred to the pope the definitive judgment of this question concerning individual persons.

It is no less instructive to note the language that Saint Leo II uses in the Decretal by which he confirms the council, and which he addresses to Constantine Pogonatus. Every single word should be weighed here, for they provide the solution to quite a few questions. Here, then, are the words of the pope in this sovereign act: “My predecessor, Pope Agatho of apostolic memory, therefore, proclaimed in his Synod this rule of right and apostolic Tradition. He sent it by his legates to Your Piety in cursory form in the page containing his declaration, approving and confirming it by the testimonies of the holy and approved Doctors of the Church. Now the great and holy council, renowned for the favor in which it is held by the Lord and by You, has received it and together with us has embraced it thoroughly, recognizing in it the genuine doctrine of blessed Peter, prince of the Apostles, and recognizing therein the signs of an unaltered religion. Therefore

61. *Lex enim de Sion exiit, ab Apostolici montis cacumine doctrina. Propterea sanctum quoque et universale concilium eundem insanum Macarium cum ejus haereseos sociis pontificali habitu nudavit. Omnes vero scriptis precibus Serenitatem nostram communiter precati sunt, ut eos ad Vestram Beatitudinem mitteremus. Sic igitur fecimus, eosque ad vos misimus, vestro paterno iudicio omnem ipsorum causam permittentes. Ibid.*

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the holy, universal and great Sixth Synod, which at God's bidding Your Clemency so carefully convoked, and at which it presided for the service of God, followed the apostolic rule and the doctrine of the approved Fathers in everything. And since the Synod published in its fullness, as has been said, the definition of the true faith, the Apostolic See of blessed Peter the Apostle (whose duties we discharge, though unequal to the task) received it with respect as well. For this reason we, too, and by our ministry this venerable Apostolic See, consent harmoniously and unanimously to the things that were defined by the said Synod, and confirm them by the authority of blessed Peter, as things which, being built upon the solid Rock which is Christ, have acquired permanence from the Lord Himself. Consequently, just as we have accepted and firmly recommend the five holy universal councils – of Nicea, of Constantinople, the first of Ephesus, of Chalcedon and of Constantinople – which the entire Church of Christ also approves and follows, so too with a similar respect and judgment we accept the holy sixth council which was recently held in the royal city by the pious efforts of Your Serenity, as their obsequious follower and their interpreter, and we decree that it is worthy to be counted among them, as having been assembled by the same grace of God in equal measure. [And it is our opinion that those Bishops of Christ's Church who faithfully gathered in it should likewise be recorded among the holy Fathers and Doctors of the Church.]”<sup>62</sup>

I thought it necessary to reproduce this important pas-

62. Hanc igitur rectae atque Apostolicae traditionis normam praedecessor meus Agatho, apostolicae memoriae Papa, cum sua Synodo praedicavit: hanc scriptis percurrentibus in suae suggestionis pagina Vestrae Pietati per suos legatos emisit, approbens et confirmans testimoniis sanctorum ac probabilium Ecclesiae Doctorum, quam sancta nunc et magna Synodus, Domini et Vestro favore celebrata, suscepit, et in omnibus nobiscum amplexa est, utpote beati Petri Apostolorum principis sinceram doctrinam in ea agnoscens, et immutatae pietatis in hac signa contrectans. Sancta

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sage of the letter whereby the Roman Pontiff confirmed the sixth council, because nowhere else in antiquity is there a document which makes it so clear how the relations between the pope and the ecumenical council were understood at that time. The Roman Pontiff first issued his letters, in which he expressed the teaching of the Apostolic See. The council, with the Roman legates presiding, discussed the terms of his letters, and having found them in conformity with the faith expressed in Scripture and Tradition, it heaped praises upon them and declared that it accepted them with respect. In accordance with them it formulated its definitions, which were then sent to the Holy See. The Roman Pontiff in turn compared the conciliar decision with the teaching of the Apostolic See, and finding it in conformity with the latter, he confirmed it by the authority of Saint Peter and gave this new council a place in the series of ancient councils that were accepted throughout the Church. It is all the more appropriate to verify this manner of proceeding in Rome with regard to the sixth council, since the Gallican authors have placed their hopes for their

igitur universalis et magna sexta Synodus, quam nutu Dei Vestra Clementia sedulo convocavit, et cui pro Dei ministerio praefuit, Apostolicam in omnibus regulam, et probabilium Patrum doctrinam secuta est: et quia definitionem rectae fidei, ut dictum est, plenissime praedicavit, quam et Apostolica sedes beati Petri Apostoli (cujus licet impares ministerio fungimur) veneranter suscepit; idcirco et nos, et per nostrum officium haec veneranda Sedes Apostolica, concorditer ac unanimiter his quae definita sunt ab ea consentit, et beati Petri auctoritate confirmat, sicut supra solidam Petram qui Christus est, ab ipso Domino adeptis firmitatem. Propterea sicut suscepimus atque firmiter praedicamus sancta quinque universalis Concilia, Nicaenum, Constantinopolitanum, Ephesinum primum, Chalcedonense, et Constantinopolitanum, quae et omnis Christi Ecclesia approbat et sequitur; ita et quod nuper in regia urbe pio Vestrae Serenitatis annisu celebratum est sanctum sextum Concilium, ut eorum pedissequum et ea interpretans, pari veneratione atque censura suscipimus, et hoc cum eis digne connumerari, tanquam una et aequali Dei gratia congregatum decernimus: et qui in eo fideliter convenerunt Christi Ecclesiae Sacerdotes, inter sanctos Ecclesiae Patres atque Doctores ascribendos aequae censemus. — Labbé, tom. VI, col. 1116.

## Part II

system upon this council. Things have always happened in this way with all the councils held in the East, except for the first and the Second Councils of Constantinople, which owe their ecumenicity, as we have seen, solely to the authority of the Holy See, which by its approval supplied what was otherwise lacking in them. It is a different case with the councils over which the pope presides in person. The decrees then are issued in the name of the Roman Pontiff, *sacro approbante concilio* [with the sacred council approving], because these decrees result from the joint action of the pope and the bishops.

The reader may also have noted that the shortcoming of Honorius, whose condemnation by the council, like that of the others who were involved in the Monothelite cause, was accepted by Leo II – that the shortcoming of Honorius, I say, had in no way altered the confidence of Saint Agatho in asserting by his letters the privilege of infallibility divinely bestowed upon the see of Rome,<sup>63</sup> nor slowed the eagerness of the bishops, whose letters I have cited, to have recourse to the Holy See in order to receive from it the true faith. From this we must conclude that the letter of Honorius, as blameworthy as it may have been, was not regarded as an *ex cathedra* decision at all; otherwise, men as zealous against the Monothelite heresy as were the three African metropolitans, Sergius of Cyprus, Stephen of Dora, Sophronius of

63. Rev. Prof. Döllinger has ventured to say that interpreting the text of Saint Luke, chapter 22, so as to refer to the privilege of infallibility bestowed upon Saint Peter and handed on to his successors, is contrary to the rules of exegesis, and that this text was never taken in this sense before the letter of Saint Agatho. It is understandable, naturally, how inconvenient this interpretation can be to Fr. Döllinger and his adherents. He will permit us, nevertheless, to reply that, even if the tradition previous to the seventh century showed no trace of it, from the moment that it became universal afterwards, it could still have legal force, since it was the practice for twelve hundred years and has not been contradicted by any of the Fathers subsequent to Saint Agatho. Besides, the Reverend Professor has not done his

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Jerusalem, Maxim of Chrysopolis and still others of the same period whom I have not cited, would have ceased to regard the See of Rome as immune to error by virtue of the promises of Jesus Christ to Saint Peter. Far from it: they have recourse to the pope's judgment with the same ease as their predecessors, just as people continued to do from all sides after the disgrace inflicted upon Honorius.

I will take from the East one last testimony along the

research precisely among the monuments of antiquity; otherwise he would have encountered, not only the text of Stephen of Dora which I have just cited, but also the letter of Pope Saint Vitalian to Paul of Crete, *ca.* 657; the testimony of Saint Martin I in his Council of Rome in 650; that of Saint Gregory the Great in his letter to the emperor Maurice in 594, and in the one which he addressed to Eulogius of Alexandria in 596; that of Pelagius II to the bishops of Istria in 580; that of Saint Leo *ca.* 440. It seems that Saint Leo and Saint Gregory the Great are doctors important enough to merit inclusion. Should I add that Bossuet, who certainly knew the tradition, considered the agreement of the Fathers on the meaning of this passage as being sufficiently unanimous to determine its interpretation as a testimony to the permanence of the faith in the See of Rome? It is enough to reread the account given by Fenelon of the discussion that arose in the Assembly of 1682 between the bishop of Meaux and the bishop of Tournay. The reader will see how firmly Bossuet supports the argument, *drawn from Tradition*, in favor of applying the passage from Saint Luke to the succession of the Roman Pontiffs. "Neque tu, instabat Meldensis, negare potes fidem Petri in sua Sede nunquam esse defecturam: id ex promissis aperte constat; id *ex traditione universa* lucidissime patet." ["Nor can you, the bishop of Meaux insisted, deny that the faith of Peter in his See shall never fail; this is quite plain from the promises; it is most clearly evident *from Tradition in its entirety*."] The continuation can be found in the treatise of Fenelon, *De summi Pontificis auctoritate* [On the Authority of the Supreme Pontiff], cap. vii, pag. 270.

Some value must be attributed to Bossuet's exegesis, especially in the interpretation of a text which, when taken in the sense of the bishop of Meaux, was a constant embarrassment for the Gallican system, as the bishop of Tournay pointed out to him. In his *Meditations on the Gospel*, Bossuet expresses himself as follows with regard to the passage in question: "The faith which Peter preached and established in Rome, and which he sealed with his blood, has never perished and never will perish. That, Milord, is the great secret of this promise: *Simon, I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and thou, confirm thy brethren*. We hold this interpretation of *Your saints* [in Ps. 88:20 or Ps. 131:9?], and the whole series of subsequent events justifies it." (Day LXXII [72]). This demonstrates once more that it is prudent to be on guard against the assertions of Germanic scholarship. Too often the system prevails over the facts and the facts then become whatever they can."

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same lines, that of Saint Theodore the Studite, and with this illustrious personage of the Greek Church I will end the series of ancient Fathers, whose opinion about the infallibility of the Roman See is expressed formally. After the ninth century, the catalogue would be unending, whether one took the testimonies from the East or from the West. I did not want to go beyond the era in which the false decretals gained credence, although Rev. Professor Döllinger and his adherents are in some need of taking two things into consideration: first, that the false decretals were not fabricated in order to establish the infallibility of the pope, a subject that they do not speak of; and in the second place, that the Church of any century in particular, with respect to the doctrinal principles that prevail within it, is just as well protected from dogmatic error as the Church of any other century. So I come to Saint Theodore the Studite, who will conclude our list, which is already long enough to provide an irrefutable argument from Tradition on this subject.

This holy and learned abbot of Constantinople, anxious as to the fate of orthodoxy, which was threatened during the disputes over sacred images, wrote to Pope Saint Leo III: “Save us, O arch-pastor of the Church which is under heaven, for we perish. Imitate Christ, your Master, and stretch out your hand to our Church, as He did to Peter: except that He offered His hand to one who was beginning to drown in the sea, while you must offer yours to a Church already sunk in the depths of heresy. Emulate, we beg you, the pope whose name you bear and who, at the height of the Eutychian heresy, roused himself in spirit like a lion, as everyone knows, in his dogmatic Epistles. I dare to ask that you, too, may roar divinely, according to the name which you bear; or

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rather thunder against this new heresy, as is fitting.”<sup>64</sup>

Later he writes along the same lines to Pope Saint Paschal: “Indeed, in all humility we recognize that the successor of the Prince of the Apostles presides over the Roman Church, and we are certainly convinced that the Lord has in no way abandoned our Church; God’s Providence has granted to it, through you, from the very start, as well as in the present tribulations, its one and only help. You are indeed, from the beginning, the pure and limpid source of orthodox truth; you are the calm port prepared for the entire Church against every heretical tempest; you are the chosen city of God for the refuge of salvation.”<sup>65</sup>

In a letter to the emperor Michael, the holy abbot demands that Rome be consulted: “May Your divine Magnificence,” he says, “command that a declaration from ancient Rome be received, as in the past, and from the beginning, the custom has been handed down to us by the tradition of our fathers. For that Church, O emperor and imitator of Christ, is supreme among the Churches of God, the one in which Peter presides as Primate [*protothronus*], to whom our Lord said: *Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock*

64. Salva nos, archipastor Ecclesiae quae sub coelo est, perimus. Imitare magistrum tuum Christum, manumque Ecclesiae nostrae porrige, sicut ille Petro: nisi quod ille incipienti in mare mergi, tu autem rursus jam mersae in haeresis profunda. Aemulare, precamur, cognominem tibi Papam, atque ut ille, pullulante tum haeresi Eutychiana, leoninum in morem spiritu experrectus est, ut omnes norunt, dogmaticis suis Epistolis: sic et tu, dicere audeo, juxta nomen quo geris, irrugi divinitus, vel potius intona contra praesentem hanc haeresim, ut decet. *Epist. xxxiii. Leoni Papae*. Migne, 1019.

65. Reipsa nos humiles cognovimus manifestum, Apostolorum principis successorem Romanae Ecclesiae praesidere, certoque nobis persuasimus, Dominum Ecclesiam nostram minime deseruisse, cui unum solumque a vobis auxilium hactenus, atque ab ipso exordio, in occurrentibus molestiis, Dei Providentia concessum est. Vos igitur illimis revera ac sincerus ab initio fons orthodoxae veritatis; vos adversus omnem haereticam procellam tranquillius sepositus Ecclesiae universae portus: vos a Deo electa civitas refugii salutis. *Epist. xiii, Paschali Papae*. Migne, 1155.

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*I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*"<sup>66</sup>

Unsure about the will of the emperor with regard to holding a council, he writes to Leo Sacellarius: "If the emperor does not approve it, and if the Patriarch Nicephorus turns aside from the truth, as he himself admits, then a delegation must be sent from both parties to the Roman Pontiff, and from there they shall obtain certitude as to the faith."<sup>67</sup>

From all these testimonies taken from the East and from the West, which could easily have been quadrupled, we are in a position to conclude that, during the first eight centuries, it was unanimously believed in the Church, not only that Saint Peter, according to the Gospels, had received the title of Pastor, Doctor, and Foundation of the Church, but also that he lived forever with these same prerogatives in his successor upon the See of Rome; that the pope was not only the center of unity, but also the infallible trustee of the deposit of revealed doctrine; he, in a word, to whom it was necessary for all parts of the Church to have recourse in order to resolve questions that arise concerning the faith. This conviction has continued through all the subsequent

66. Quod si quid est ejusmodi de quo ambigat aut diffidat divina Magnificentia vestra, pie a Patriarcha dissolvi posse; jubeat magna ipsius et a Deo confirmata manus, velut divinorum aemulatrix ad communem utilitatem, a vetere Roma suscipi declarationem, prout olim et ab initio paterna traditione transmissus mos fuit. Haec enim, Christi aemule imperator, suprema est Ecclesiarum Dei, in qua Petrus protothronus sedit, ad quem Dominus dixit: *Tu es Petrus, et super hanc Petram aedificabo Ecclesiam meam, et portae inferi non praevalerunt adversus eam.* *Epist. LXXXVI.* Migne, 1331. [*The first sentence in Latin reads: "If there is any matter such that Your divine Magnificence doubts that it can be resolved by the dutiful Patriarch, let your own great hand, confirmed by God striving after divine things for the common good, command...etc."*]

67. Quod si hoc minime probet imperator, deflexitque, ut ipse ait, a veritate Nicephorus Patriarcha: mittenda est ad Romanum ex utraque parte legatio, et inde fidei accipienda certitudo. *Epist. CXXIX, Leoni Sacellario.* Migne, pag. 1419.



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centuries until today, and if anyone wants proof of this, he will find it in the complete consent which the body of the Church has constantly rendered to the dogmatic definitions of the Roman Pontiffs, since the eighth century as well as in the previous centuries. It is lawful for us to conclude, therefore, that the Tradition of the Church is in perfect agreement with Scripture as to the personal infallibility of the successor of Saint Peter.

### **III. Doctrinal decrees of the utmost importance have prepared the way for a definition in favor of the infallibility of the pope.**

I. The first of these facts [of Church history], chronologically, is the profession of faith presented in 519 by order of Pope Saint Hormisdas for the signature of all the bishops of the Eastern Church and accepted by them. This formula, which restores to unity of faith and communion with the Holy See those immense regions which had been separated long before through the influence of Acacius, the Eutychian Patriarch of Constantinople, was signed by the Patriarchs, Archbishops and Bishops, numbering more than a thousand in all. It was also signed several times under various popes, and later confirmed by the eighth ecumenical council. Here is the substance of it:

“The first condition of salvation is to keep the rule of the true faith, and not to deviate in the least from the Tradition of the Fathers; because it is not possible to overlook the declaration of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who said, *Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My Church*. These words are verified by the consequences, since the Catholic faith has always been preserved immaculate in the Apostolic See.”<sup>68</sup>

68. Prima salus est, rectae fidei regulam custodire, et a Patrum traditione nullatenus deviare; quia non potest Domini nostri Jesu Christi praetermitti sententia dicentis: *Tu es Petrus, et super hanc Petram aedificabo Ecclesiam meam*. Haec quae dicta sunt, rerum probantur effectibus; quia in Sede Apostolica immaculata est semper servata religio. – Labbé, tom. IV, col. 1486.

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At this point are described the heresies which the signatory renounces; after that, the formulary continues as follows:

“That is why, following in all things the Apostolic See, and proclaiming everything that it has decreed, I hope that I may merit to be with you (the Roman Pontiff) in the one communion which the Apostolic See proclaims, *in which is found the integral and true stability of the Christian religion*. I promise, furthermore, not to recite during the holy mysteries the names of those who are separated from the communion of the Catholic Church, that is, who do not agree in all things with the Apostolic See.

“I have signed in my own hand this, my Profession, and I have presented it to you, Hormisdas, the holy and venerable pope of the city of Rome.”<sup>69</sup>

The importance of this Profession of faith, in which the Apostolic See is declared to have within itself the *integral and true stability of the Christian religion*, could not fail to impress anyone who is willing to take the trouble to investigate the terms of it. On the one hand, the innumerable marks of approval that it received over the course of several centuries throughout the Orthodox East, are proof enough that we are not dealing here with an obscure document whose authority could be challenged. Bossuet himself perceived this, and here is the judgment that he passes on it: “We know,” he says, “that this Profession was used in the centuries that followed, with

69. Unde sequentes in omnibus Apostolicam Sedem, et praedicentes ejus omnia constituta, spero ut in una communione vobiscum quam Sedes Apostolica praedicat, esse merear, in qua est integra et vera christianae religionis soliditas: promittens etiam sequestratos a communione Ecclesiae catholicae, id est, non in omnibus consentientes Sedi Apostolicae, eorum nomina inter sacra non recitanda esse mysteria. Hanc autem Professionem meam, propria manu scripsi, et tibi Hormisdas, sancto et venerabili Papae urbis Romae obtuli. *Ibid.*

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the same beginning and the same conclusion, adding in each instance the names of the heresies and heretics which troubled the Church in that particular era. Just as all the bishops sent it to Pope Saint Hormisdas, to Saint Agapitus and to Nicholas I, so too in the eighth ecumenical council we read the document in the same words as it was presented to Pope Hadrian II, the successor of Nicholas. Therefore, since it was spread everywhere, propagated over the centuries, and consecrated by an ecumenical council, what Christian would dare to reject it?"<sup>70</sup>

It was by relying principally upon this precious document that Bossuet continually defended what he called the "indefectibility" of the Roman See against those who took an extreme Gallican position. If the reader weighs the terms of it carefully, it is impossible to find in it anything which could be reconciled with that intermittent quality which the bishop of Meaux believed he could ascribe to the profession of faith by the Apostolic See. If the *stability* of the Christian faith is in the Roman See, it is possible to suppose that this Chair could be found wanting for even a single day, without dragging all of Christendom with it to destruction? If the permanence of the faith professed by the Apostolic See is founded upon Jesus Christ's own word, how could it ever be suspended? If in order to be Catholic one must always and in everything be *in agreement with the Apostolic See*, how can one imagine that this See could be in error even for a single day?

70. Hanc professionem eodem initio, eadem conclusione, additis subinde haeresibus atque haeticis, qui suis temporibus Ecclesiam conturbassent, per secuta secula frequentatam scimus. Hanc uti sancto Hormisdæ Papæ, sanctoque Agapeto, ac Nicolao primo, omnes episcopi fecerant; ita iisdem verbis Adriano secundo Papæ, Nicolai successoris, faciam in Concilio octavo oecumenico legimus. Haec ergo ubique diffusa, omnibus saeculis propagata, ab oecumenico Concilio consecrata, quis respuat Christianus? *Defensio Declarationis cleri Gallicani*. Lib. X, cap. vii.

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Let us listen now to Fenelon:

“God forbid that anyone should ever take such a solemn act, by which the schismatic bishops returned to unity, for a vague, flattering compliment which has no precise or serious significance. It is a question here of the promise which the Son of God made to Saint Peter, *which is verified* from one century to the next *by its consequences*. *Haec quae dicta sunt rerum probantur effectibus*. What are these *consequences*? The fact that *the Catholic faith has always been preserved immaculate and inviolable in the Apostolic See*. The fact that *this Church*, as we will soon hear her say to Monseigneur Bossuet, the bishop of Meaux, is *ever virgin*, that *Peter will always speak upon his throne*, and that *the Roman faith is forever the faith of the Church*. The fact that, when someone remains *in communion with Rome*, he holds the *integral and perfect stability of the Christian religion*. The fact that there is no difference at all between those *who are deprived of communion with the Catholic Church* and those *who are not COMPLETELY united with this see in their thinking*. Thus whoever contradicts the Roman faith, which is the center of the common tradition, contradicts that of the entire Church. Conversely, whoever remains united to the doctrine of this *ever-virgin Church*, risks nothing with respect to his faith. This promise, though general, though absolute in a profession of faith, contains nothing rash or excessive for the bishops themselves who are obliged to sign it in their assembly. Be on guard then, my beloved brothers, against listening to those who will dare to tell you that this formulary of Pope Saint Hormisdas, composed twelve hundred years ago to heal the schism of Acacius, was merely a momentary concern of the See of Rome. This profession of faith, which was so decisive for the cause of unity, was

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renewed by Hadrian II more than three hundred years later to put an end to the schism of Photius, and it was unanimously approved in the eighth general council.”<sup>71</sup>

II. A second doctrinal fact which militates in favor of a definition concerning the infallibility of the pope, is the condemnation by Sixtus IV in 1479 of this proposition which had been taught by a Spanish doctor named Pedro d’Osma: *Ecclesia urbis Romae errare potest*. This proposition, along with eight others affirmed by the same doctor, are condemned in terms describing them as *scandalous and heretical*. Hence one can reason as follows: If it is heterodox to say that *the Church of the city of Rome can err*, one must accept the contradictory and say: *The Church of Rome is infallible*. Now, the Church of Rome and the pope, from the perspective of the teaching of the faith, are one and the same. Through its bishop, the Church of Rome teaches all the churches and all the faithful. The Church of Rome and the successor of Saint Peter are identified, so that one can refer equally well to the Apostolic See or to the pope; yet it is by Saint Peter and in Saint Peter, who lives forever in his successors, that the Church of Rome is the Mother Church and governess of all the churches.

III. The Declaration issued by the Assembly of the French Clergy in 1682, concerning ecclesiastical dominion, claims that the unchangeable validity of the decisions of the Roman Pontiff in questions of faith depends on the consent of the Church. This Declaration was set aside and annulled by a Brief of Innocent XI in 1682. Alexander VIII, the successor of that pope, rescinded and annulled it again in 1690 by the Bull, *Inter multiplices*. Pius VI, in the

71. *Deuxième Mandement sur la Constitution Unigenitus. Oeuvres complètes*, tom. XIV, page 541.

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Bull, *Auctorem fidei*, condemned the decision of the Synod of Pistoia to include the Declaration in its Acts as *rash, scandalous* and *supremely injurious to the Holy See*. It is true that the Roman Pontiffs, in their prudence and charity, did not judge it appropriate to attach any mark of censure to the articles which comprise this Declaration; but if the doctrine that it contains were pure, would it have been a credible course of action for these popes to proceed so rigorously against this formula? Does not this severity indicate, on the contrary, that the principles contained in the Declaration of 1682, and which were supposed to prevail thereby in France, were in fact reprehensible? Didn't this Declaration have, as its constant supporters, all of the Church's adversaries, who made it into a weapon against her most legitimate rights? From all that took place in this regard, one must conclude that the doctrines contained in it are not the truth. Is it not safer for the children of the Church to take refuge in the contradictory? Now the contradictory is, that the decisions issued by the Roman pontiffs on matters of doctrine are in and of themselves unchangeable, that is, infallible.

IV. Alexander VIII, by a Decree published in Rome according to ordinary procedures and dated December 7, 1690, condemned thirty-one propositions as being *rash, scandalous, offensive, injurious, bordering on heresy, smacking of heresy, erroneous, schismatic, and heretical respectively*. The Decree was included in the Roman collection of papal bulls, and it is found in all anthologies of doctrinal decisions of the Holy See. In it, Alexander VIII threatens with excommunication all those who would support the above-mentioned propositions or would put them into practice.

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Now, the twenty-ninth proposition is as follows: *Futilis et toties convulsa est assertio de Romani Pontificis supra Concilium auctoritate, atque in fidei quaestionibus decernendis infallibilitate*. [To say that the authority of the Roman Pontiff is above that of a council, and that his judgment in questions of faith is infallible, is a futile assertion that has been refuted repeatedly.]

As we consider the stigma thus inflicted upon Gallicanism and the penalties decreed *ipso facto* for those who would defend this proposition or put it into practice, we quite naturally recall the Decree of Alexander VII on the Immaculate Conception, which prepared the way for the solemn definition which Pius IX had the honor of pronouncing two centuries later.<sup>72</sup> Alexander VII, too, applied the Church's censures to those who dared to affirm publicly that Mary had been conceived with the stain of original sin. This decree did not yet compel the thinking of believers, but it narrowed the ground under the feet of those who opposed the cherished belief of the Christian people.

The same thing takes place through the decree of Alexander VIII in the question as to the infallibility of the pope. Those who do not admit this infallibility are not made the object of any censure; but those who treat it as *worthless* and *futile* incur excommunication. What should we think about those who declare it to be false? Do they not put into practice the condemned teaching? I do not take it upon myself to draw the conclusion.

72. It would be desirable for all those who take part today in the discussion of religious questions to have at hand the excellent collection published at Würzburg by Dr. Denzinger under the title: *Enchiridion Symbolorum et definitionum, quae de rebus fidei et morum a Conciliis oecumenicis et summis Pontificibus emanarunt*. In-12, 1864. [Enchiridion of Creeds and definitions on matters of faith and morals which have been issued by ecumenical councils and supreme Pontiffs.]



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From these four doctrinal facts it seems to follow, that the doctrine of papal infallibility is not a doctrine which can be debated with such complete freedom in the Church as some claim. If “the integral stability of the Christian religion is found in the Apostolic See,” as thousands of Eastern bishops and the eighth ecumenical council attest, how can anyone suppose that such a foundation of the Christian religion could fail for even one day, without depriving it at the same time of its divine character? If Catholicity expels from her bosom anyone who teaches that “the Church of Rome can err”, how is it possible to suppose that the pope can teach error, given that the Roman Church explains itself through him? If the doctrine of the Declaration [of 1682] is a sound doctrine, how does one explain the fact that this Declaration has itself been the object of such a severe and solemn reprobation on the part of three popes? If one brings about a rupture with the Catholic Church and breaks the bond of communion by simply maintaining that papal infallibility is a frivolous doctrine, how can someone remain in the Church who teaches that this doctrine is contrary to the truth and who will defend the opposite opinion as true?

It has been objected that even Innocent XI, who was the first to set aside and annul the Declaration of 1682, had addressed to Bossuet some years previously two Briefs filled with compliments on the book which he had just published, to facilitate the return of Protestants to the Church, and which he had entitled: *Exposition of Catholic Doctrine*. Bossuet, at that time bishop of Condom, said in this book, with regard to the authority of the Holy See: “As for the theses which are debated in the schools, as is well known, even though the faculty members incessantly advance them in order to make this dominion odious, it is unnecessary to

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speak of them here, since they do not belong to the Catholic faith. It is enough to recognize a leader, established by God to guide the entire flock along its paths; and this will always be done willingly by those who love harmony among brothers and ecclesiastical unanimity.”<sup>73</sup>

This passage from Bossuet’s Exposition, as one can see, was composed with great caution. The vague terms that one finds here do not describe, either directly or remotely, the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff; one senses, rather, that there is an allusion to the question of the pope’s power over the temporal power of kings. On the other hand, the notion expressed there of a *leader, established by God to guide the entire flock along its paths*, is so broad and capable of elaboration, that one can logically apply it to all the prerogatives of the pope, including infallibility in teaching the faith. No wonder, then, that Rome praised the purpose of the book and the book itself.

But several years later, when Innocent XI was faced with a Declaration composed by some bishops, in which the decisions of the Roman Pontiff in matters of faith were presented as not being unchangeable *per se*, Rome, the guardian of doctrine, had to be alarmed and to register its dissatisfaction. If Rome did not judge it appropriate to apply the notes [“heretical”, etc.] to the articles of the Declaration, it was in order to preserve the peace and in the hope of a return [to orthodoxy]; but Rome had to take precautions in the interest of right doctrine. Hence the condemnation of the twenty-ninth Proposition by Alexander VIII; hence the emphatic Brief of Clement XI to the bishops of the Assembly of 1705. As a consequence of these apostolic acts and of those that followed, one

73. *Exposition de la doctrine catholique*, section xxi.

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senses that a definition becomes more and more probable with every passing day.

They are strange theologians, indeed, who come to tell us at this juncture: Two centuries ago there was no question of defining the infallibility of the pope; therefore there is no reason to think of doing so today. Are they unaware, then, of the progress of revealed truth, the progress made famous by Saint Vincent of Lerins, which brings dogmatic definitions to maturity. When Alexander VII issued his decree on the Immaculate Conception, did he prevent Pius IX from defining it as a revealed dogma two centuries later? During that interval, the Holy Spirit had guided and prepared everything, and the proclamation took place at the proper time, to the applause of the entire Church. In the same way it could happen that the centuries have brought on the moment destined for the insertion of papal infallibility among the dogmas of the Church. It is undeniable that the preparation over the centuries has been at least as apparent as it was, in 1854, for the mystery of the Immaculate Conception.

But just as, on the eve of the definition of the latter mystery, it was true to say that what a Christian believed about the Immaculate Conception was already less free than it had been two centuries previously, it seems that one can also state that the belief in papal infallibility impresses itself today more forcefully upon the awareness of the Christian than it could before the accomplishment of all the doctrinal facts that are collected in this present section.

It would be a serious error to think that the faithful are not obliged to adhere to anything except to those truths which it has been declared heretical to contradict. There are many other points of doctrine which, as Pius IX

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teaches in his Brief of December 21, 1863 to the Archbishops of Mayence and Freisingen, “are admitted by the general and constant consensus of Catholics as theological truths, or else as conclusions which are so certain, that even though the opinions opposed to these points of doctrine cannot be called heretical, they nevertheless merit another theological censure.”<sup>74</sup>

74. Tum iis doctrinae capitibus (se subjiciant), quae communi et constanti Catholicorum consensu retinentur ut theologicae veritates, et conclusiones ita certae, ut opiniones eisdem doctrinae capitibus adversae, quanquam haereticae dici nequeant, tamen aliam theologicam mereantur censuram. *Epist. ad Archiepisc. Moguntinum, Frisingensem.*

#### **IV. Scholastic opinion favors a doctrinal definition of the infallibility of the pope.**

The function of Scholasticism, within the Church, is to meditate more deeply upon and to point out the interrelationships among the truths of the revealed order. Scholasticism receives them by faith and tests them respectfully with the twofold principle from which we derive these truths, namely, Scripture and Tradition. Proceeding philosophically, theology first arrives at a scientific determination of which dogmas are, strictly speaking, revealed by God. Furthermore theology examines the direct consequences that result, either from the comparison of two revealed truths, or else from the relation of a revealed truth to an evident principle of reason. By this procedure, carried out under the Church's supervision and with complete submission to her authority, theology manages to give us a clearer understanding of the various points of divine doctrine; with certainty it multiplies the applications and the developments thereof, thus preparing the definitions that the Church will make, when the time comes.

Now it is indisputable that, on the question of papal infallibility, Scholasticism, by way of the deductions of theological science, has arrived at a pure and simple affirmation of the doctrine. It would be too laborious to enumerate here in detail the doctors who agree in giving us this proposition: "The pope, in making an *ex cathedra* decision con-

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cerning the faith, is infallible,” as a statement identical to the word of God, whether revealed or traditional. I will limit myself to mentioning here two names, in which one can say that the authority of Scholasticism is concentrated: Saint Thomas [Aquinas] and Suarez.

Saint Thomas, without being one of the Church Fathers, belongs to the category of holy Doctors officially recognized by the Church; yet at the same time he is the foundation stone of Scholasticism by his immortal *Summa* [*Theologiae*]. At the Council of Nicea the Holy Gospels were exhibited in the middle of the conference hall; fifteen [sic] centuries later, at the Council of Trent, this conciliar tradition inspired by faith and piety was again followed, but they placed on the dais, beside the divinely-inspired book, the *Summa* of the Angelic Doctor.

Now here is the doctrine of Saint Thomas on the prerogative of the Roman Pontiff in teaching the faith:

“Since the Sovereign Pontiff is the head of the entire Church instituted by Jesus Christ, it belongs principally to his authority to issue the Symbol of faith [or Creed], as well as to convoke a general council.

“I answer that, as stated above [in Objection 1], a new edition of the Symbol becomes necessary in order to set aside the errors that may arise. Consequently to publish a new edition of the Symbol belongs to that authority which is empowered to decide matters of faith finally, so that they may be held by all with unshaken faith. Now this belongs to the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff, ‘to whom the more important and more difficult questions that arise in the Church are referred,’ as stated in the Decretals (distinction 17, canon 5). Hence our Lord said to Peter whom he made Sovereign Pontiff (Luke 22:32): ‘I have prayed for thee,

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Peter, that thy faith fail not, and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren.’ The reason of this is that there should be but one faith of the whole Church, according to 1 Corinthians 1:10: ‘That you all speak the same thing, and that there be no schisms among you’: and this could not be secured unless any question of faith that may arise be decided by him who presides over the whole Church, so that the whole Church may hold firmly to his decision. Consequently it belongs to the sole authority of the Sovereign Pontiff to publish a new edition of the Symbol, as do all other matters which concern the whole Church, such as to convoke a general council and so forth.”<sup>75</sup>

Nothing, I imagine, could be clearer or more precise. The opinion of the Angel of Scholasticism is explicit; we must take it as it is. Fr. Döllinger ventures to say that Saint Thomas was led into error by some apocryphal texts; this is a sorry pretence.<sup>76</sup> In this Article, the Angelic Doctor relies upon the text

75. Cum summus Pontifex caput sit totius Ecclesiae a Christo institutus, ad illum maxime spectat Symbolum fidei edere, sicut etiam generalem Synodum congregare. Respondeo dicendum, quod sicut supra dictum est, nova editio Symboli necessaria est ad vitandum insurgentes errores. Ad illius ergo auctoritatem pertinet editio Symboli, ad cujus auctoritatem pertinet finaliter determinare ea quae sunt fidei, ut ab omnibus inconcussa fide teneantur. Hoc autem pertinet ad auctoritatem summi Pontificis, ad quem majores et difficiliores Ecclesiae quaestiones referuntur, ut dicitur in Decretali, Lib. *De Baptismo*, c. *Majores*. Unde et Dominus, Luc, xxii, Petro dixit, quem summum Pontificem constituit, Ego pro te rogavi, Petre, ut non deficiat fides tua: et tu aliquando conversus, confirma fratres tuos. Et hujus ratio est: quia una fides debet esse totius Ecclesiae; secundum illud I ad Cor. I: “Id ipsum dicatis omnes, et non sint in vobis schismata.” Quod servari non posset, nisi quaestio de fide exorta determinetur per eum qui toti Ecclesiae praeest: ut sic ejus sententia a tota Ecclesia firmiter teneatur. Et ideo ad solam auctoritatem summi Pontificis pertinet nova editio Symboli; sicut et omnia alia quae pertinent ad totam Ecclesiam; ut congregare Synodum generalem, et alia hujusmodi. (2-2, quaest. I, art. x). [English translation by the English Dominican Fathers, as recorded by Harmony Media, Inc., “St. Thomas Aquinas and the Summa Theologica on CD-ROM”, Gervais, Oregon, 1998.]

76. No doubt one encounters here and there, in the writings of Saint Thomas and in those of the ancient Theologians and apologists, a certain number of passages attributed to the saintly Fathers [of the Church], and which the [higher] criticism of

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of the Gospel itself, and the Chapter *Majores* which he cites is a quite authentic passage by [Pope] Saint Gelasius. It has been established for our thesis, therefore, that the prince of Scholasticism is as much in favor of it as possible.

It would be long and tedious to include here the list of the several thousand authors from all countries who have affirmed this same teaching, from Saint Thomas down to the present day. It will be enough to produce just one name, that of Suarez, in whom we hear all of Scholasticism, as Bossuet says. Here is the opinion of the *Doctor eximius* [the Distinguished Doctor].

“It is a Catholic truth that the pope, when he defines *ex cathedra*, is a Rule of faith which cannot err, when he authentically proposes something to the Church as some-

the past two centuries has proven to be apocryphal. During the Middle Ages and up until the sixteenth century, people did not have the correct editions that we have available today, and complete editions of an author’s writings did not exist anywhere. Therefore one inevitably made errors in certain questions of fact. Baronius and Bellarmine themselves, despite the immense step forward that they took in criticism, had to pay tribute to this insufficiency of means for verification. It would ill suit us, nevertheless, to look down on these great men to whom scholarship owes so much. The same can be said for Saint Thomas as for the two illustrious authors that I have just mentioned. Let us willingly admit that a proof can sometimes be deficient in one of its secondary arguments; but the proof in its totality more than makes up for that. Besides, the Article of Saint Thomas that has just been cited is as irreproachable from the critical point of view as it is from the logical perspective, so that it succeeds in establishing with complete clarity the opinion of the prince of theologians on the question.

Fr. Döllinger’s insistence on the absence of criticism among the defenders of papal infallibility is entirely unjust, after the works of such scholars as Orsi, Ballerini, Mamachi, Zaccaria, Veith, Muzzarelli, etc., which are so meticulous in every way. No one will argue with his statement that personal knowledge of early Church history is a prerequisite for every serious theologian. The study of the Scholastic Doctors is indispensable; but it could not be sufficient in itself, particularly in questions relating to the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff. If we possessed the writings of the Fathers and the councils only in excerpts of a few lines each, gathered second-hand, we would often find ourselves liable to cite “authorities” that are not authoritative at all. Thus we read in our own days, in an excellent review, a passage supposedly by Saint Athanasius which never belonged to that holy Doctor, but which was taken from an apocryphal letter which is found only among his spurious works. The article, incidentally, is excellent, but, given the enemies of the Church,



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thing to be believed by divine faith. So all Catholic Doctors teach at this time, and I consider that this teaching is a certain matter of faith."<sup>77</sup>

The French School, as I demonstrated above, contributes only a very faint dissonance to this harmonious agreement. It started late, it had long intermissions, and it is compromised indirectly by the severe measures taken by three popes against the Declaration of 1682 and directly by the condemnation of the proposition *Futilis et toties convulsa* by Alexander VIII. Furthermore, it has imperceptibly dissolved over the past century in the course of the pastoral polemic against the “appellants” [those who appealed from papal teaching to a future council], when one could hear the French bishops teaching in their Mandates against the fol-

it is regrettable that defenders of Roman doctrines should make such imprudent mistakes, which are not all that rare today.

This is not to say that, in another school of thought, one does not run the risk of finding lines written which suddenly reveal the weakness of contemporary scholarship concerning Christian antiquity. I will always remember the impression made upon me as I read in the April 1867 issue of the *Correspondant* an article entitled “*Femmes savantes et Femmes studieuses*” [“Learned women and studious women”]. The author of that article said that Clement of Alexandria had been a disciple of Hypatia, without seeming to suspect that two centuries separated those two personages and that the learned lady Hypatia, whose Christianity was being touted, had been in the fifth century the last proponent of pagan philosophy. The tragic death of that famous woman has been blamed often enough on the Christians, since Voltaire down to today, that it is only natural that [a Frenchman] should be aware of it. There might have been reason to be concerned about Saint Cyril of Alexandria, who was so unjustly calumniated in reference to that unfortunate event, instead of trying to create connections between the unhappy Hypatia and the illustrious doctor of the Christian school in second-century Alexandria. Fr. Döllinger is not quite as infallible as he ought to be; but had he been consulted then, I have no doubt that he would have made it his duty to give useful advice to the author of the article. But perhaps his critical German mind might have revolted against the following sentence, which deals with Saint Catherine [of Siena, now a Doctor of the Church], and he might have accused the author with relying on legendary sources [about Saint Catherine the early martyr]. I would not take it upon myself to reconcile the two.

77. Nihilominus veritas Catholica est, Pontificem definientem ex Cathedra esse regulam fidei, quae errare non potest, quando aliquid authentice proponit universae Ecclesiae, tanquam de fide divina credendum: ita docent hoc tempore omnes catholici Doctores, et censeo esse rem de fide certam. *De fide*, Disput. V, sect. viii.

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lowers of Quesnel: 1. That the dogmatic decision of the Roman Pontiff is identical to that of the Holy See, and that any distinction made between the See and the person is inadmissible; 2. that Jesus Christ granted to Peter and to his successors an immovable and unshakeable firmness in the faith, and that this stability is the principle of the Church's own stability; 3. that the effect of Jesus Christ's prayer for Saint Peter and the command which this apostle received, to confirm his brethren, extended to his successors; 4. that one must conclude from the passage by Saint Irenaeus that the Roman Church cannot stray from the faith; 5. that the saying of Saint Augustine: *Causa finita est*, was not said because the Pelagian heresy had already been condemned by the universal Church, but solely because the pope, Saint Innocent I had pronounced his dogmatic judgment upon it; that the Apostolic See, being the center of Catholic unity, *ipso facto* could not deviate from the truth of the faith; 6. that all Christians owe to the dogmatic Constitutions of the Roman Pontiff the sincere interior consent of their intellect; 7. that what is recounted about the fall of Liberius, of Vigilius and of Honorius cannot in any way weaken the authority of the dogmatic decrees of the Holy See; 8. that the reading and discussion of letters from the Roman Pontiffs in the councils of the East in no way invalidated the formal and irrevocable decision already conveyed in these letters, etc. In [the anthology edited by] Soardi we can find all these points discussed by a large number of French bishops in their Mandates, and the conclusion drawn by these prelates is always in conformity with the Roman doctrine. Furthermore it is well known that several of these Mandates were condemned by decisions of Parliament and burned after being torn to pieces at the hands of the executioner.

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I will add that there is not one single objection in the book by Bishop de Sura that cannot be answered by passages taken word for word from these precious documents of our thirteenth-century episcopate. From all this, are we not in a position to conclude once again that the Gallican views have never had any serious or lasting support in France?

At the present time, after the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, after the Concordat of 1801, after the re-establishment of the Roman Liturgy [in France], the Gallican prejudices are more remote than ever. No doubt several exceptions among individuals could be cited, but they cannot impede the moral unanimity. Everyone today believes that the Church's power resides in the Roman Pontiff, and we might add that even civil society, which is in jeopardy as a result of diminished respect for authority, can only gain from anything that tends to exalt the papal monarchy. Constance and Basel undeniably had a great influence in the future crises of European society; I am not the first to note this. The Church, which has a divine constitution, has been able to resist and shall resist to the very end; but she must contend with those maxims that undermine secular states and could lead them irreversibly into ruin, if God – Who preserves this world for the sake of His Church, that is to say, for His elect – were not in His mercy watching over the salvation of the human race.

## **V. The opinion of the Christian people favors a doctrinal definition of the infallibility of the pope.**

In the preceding we have established that the Christian people, which is referred to as “the Church taught”, participates to a certain degree in that supernatural life which has the Holy Spirit as its principle. In the writings of the Fathers, in the language of the ancient councils, we see that when the pastors gather in sessions to deliberate about the faith, besides their testimony to their personal belief as judges, they bear witness at the same time to the belief of their people. Thus, since the body of the faithful is represented in a council which, we assume, also fulfills all the other conditions, we can say in all truth that the Catholic Church, the Bride of Jesus Christ, is present there in her entirety.

It follows from this that the thinking of the Christian people must be taken into serious consideration when dealing with questions of doctrine to be defined, and that, far from being restrained by their pastors, the people must be allowed complete freedom of expression. Nestorius was preaching his heresy from his lofty patriarchal throne of Constantinople, and no orthodox believer was scandalized when a simple layman, the advocate Eusebius, stood up and said to his face: Anathema! – thus giving voice to the indignant multitude of the faithful. This courageous man, who in this way was able to do credit to the divine character of his Baptism, later became the most reverend Eusebius, bishop

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of Dorylaeum, and fought valiantly for the faith. Soon the Nestorian heresy was arraigned before the ecumenical Council of Ephesus. Throughout that city consecrated to Mary, the faithful were given over to intense emotions while waiting for the final judgment. The people remained standing for hours, without respite, during one of the longest days in June, giving witness to their hopes for a decision which would vindicate the honor of the Mother of God. Finally, towards evening, the doors of the church where the council was in session opened, and it was announced that the doctrine and the person of the blasphemous patriarch had just been condemned. At this news, the crowd burst into ecstatic rejoicing. From all quarters, a thousand voices were raised, blessing the council and praising God that the enemy of the faith had been overcome. By torchlight they led the bishops back to their residences; the women walked ahead of them burning incense. A general illumination of the city ended that great day. Everyone felt that the faith was the common good, possessed in solidarity by the teaching Church and the learning Church, which form but one Church.

After this account, which we could follow with several more of the same sort, let us examine whether the faithful people would be pleased to see the infallibility of the Sovereign Pontiff defined as a truth of the faith. One thing is evident for the observer: that this catholic sentiment which Father Faber, of holy of illustrious memory, called *devotion to the pope*, is today more than ever one of the characteristics of the piety found throughout the Church. If pilgrimages to the tombs of the holy Apostles were rare forty years ago and before – so much so that throughout the course of the great jubilee year of 1825 the number of pil-

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grims scarcely reached two hundred thousand, including the Italians and even the subjects of the Papal States – it must be admitted that the times have changed. Presently, if one counts only the pious travelers from abroad [*i.e.* non-Italians], in the various seasons which piety seeks to celebrate in the Holy City, the annual figure amounts to at least that of 1825. From another perspective, if one calculates the incessant stream of generous donations, and the personal sacrifices [*i.e.* volunteers in the papal army] which are inspired world-wide by the desire to safeguard the temporal domain of the pope, one cannot help but agree that in no period of history, not even in the Age of Faith, has the Papacy ever been the object of such a tender and universal interest on the part of the children of the Church.

From the midst of this horrible anarchy, which threatens to annihilate every last notion of a principle of authority, there arises among Catholics a sense, more lively than ever, of veneration and submission toward the Roman Pontiff; and this sense, which the Holy Spirit produces and makes fruitful, is founded upon the universal belief, which is increasingly better understood, that the Roman Pontiff is the Vicar of God upon earth.

Let an experiment be conducted: let a pastor, as eloquent and reputable as can be, try to say to his people from the height of the pulpit: “My brethren, the pope whom you venerate, and whom I venerate, too, as the Head of the Church, is not safeguarded from error so completely that he cannot fall into it. He can even attempt to drag down others as he falls. The Church would then be in danger of perishing; rest assured, however: the episcopate would reprimand their head. Should it happen that the latter tried to resist, the episcopate would have every right to deliver the Church from

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him. Therefore when a dogmatic Decree of the Sovereign Pontiff comes to your attention, be aware that it is not irrevocable *per se*; for it could contain error. In order to be sure of its orthodoxy, you must wait for the episcopate scattered throughout the world to study and judge it. If the thinking of the episcopate is in conformity with the papal decretal, then this decretal will become infallible. Until such time, do not adhere yet to the doctrine that it contains; for it is not permissible to give the assent of faith to something uncertain; but you will be able and required to do it, when the document returns to you invested with the approval of the episcopate.”

I ask you: does anyone believe that the faithful, upon hearing such language, would not revolt? This is not something that one would want to put to the test; yet if such a system is the truth, as Bishop de Sura maintains, one wonders why they don't tell the truth to the faithful, which has the right to know the constitution of the Church of which it forms a part.

The hypothetical situation that I describe here of instruction offensive to pious ears, which would consist of speaking in the presence of the faithful along the lines of a system designed to shock the instincts of faith, has already come about in the days preceding the definition of the Immaculate Conception. At that time, in a treatise on whether this great debate could end in a dogmatic definition, I had occasion to cite a mandate by Monseigneur Bouvier, bishop of Le Mans, in which this prelate wrote as follows concerning the inquiry that the pope had made to the bishops as to the thinking of their churches with reference to this item of belief: “If in our days an audacious man – even if he were high-ranking, renowned for his talents, his knowledge, and his eloquence – ventured to speak publicly in one of the

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pulpits of our Churches against the Immaculate Conception of the Holy Virgin, as the patriarch Nestorius once spoke in Constantinople against her divine Maternity, would the surprise and scandal be any less great? We affirm, without hesitation, that it would meet with unanimous rejection by the clergy and the faithful, intense sorrow, and profound affliction at seeing her thus reduced and degraded, whom we are accustomed to honor as having been pure and spotless.”<sup>78</sup>

When matters have reached such a state, one can very well say that the thinking of the Christian people is not uncertain. Now, I repeat, in regard to the authority of the Supreme Pontiff, it would not be prudent to upset the thinking of the faithful. One would make oneself suspicious in their eyes if one ventured to preach that they should be reserved in their submission to and respect for what comes from Rome. The faithful understand this saying from the Gospel: “Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My Church,” and they have the grace to understand it purely and simply in the sense intended by Saint Ambrose when he said: *Ubi Petrus, ibi Ecclesia* [Where Peter is, there is the Church].

And let no one say that these questions are among those that are strictly academic and are unsuitable for the pulpit.<sup>79</sup> On the contrary, there is nothing more practical. The ecumenical council is a rare event; the errors that arise in the Church are, ordinarily, struck down by papal decisions. If

78. Mandate [*Mandement*] of the bishop of Le Mans, dated April 8, 1849, p. 8.

79. That was the thought of the eloquent and very broad-minded bishop of Hermopolis. I heard the respectable Doctor Perdrau – whose name will always be cherished by his friends and is still worthily represented today by his children – recount the following incident which is à propos here.

At the time of the First Empire, Monsieur Frayssinous applied his zeal to the task of preserving the faith and Christian conduct of a certain number of students from the schools of Law and Medicine in Paris. During the severe crisis of the Priesthood and the Empire, these young men, M. Perdrau among them, said to him: “Your Reverence, the controversy is quite spirited, and we need to know what side



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you are convinced that these decisions are not unchangeable before the Episcopate judges them, then you must warn the faithful about this, for fear that they might be shipwrecked in their faith; but then, have no doubt about it, you will be a cause of scandal to them. On the other hand, if you keep silence, you become responsible for the error into which you plunge them in the case where, according to your theory, the apostolic decision would need to be reformed.

Let us add one more remark. This lack of popularity, which the Gallican theory must always count on experiencing with any Catholic congregation, has its inevitable counterpart in the sympathy that the enemies of the faith have

we are obliged in conscience to take. Should we be Gallicans? Should we be Ultramontanans?" Fr. Frayssinous replied: "Sirs, you are not and you cannot be theologians; therefore I have only one piece of advice to give you: I prefer that you be Ultramontanans. You will preserve the true faith more easily that way. If you wanted to be Gallicans, I would fear that you might soon be led into error." One must do justice to the loyalty that dictates this response; but what a light it sheds on the respective value of the doctrines! One will encounter some sincere men who have been seduced by Gallicanism, but their sincerity itself will oblige them to be circumspect in the presence of believers. Now, I ask you, where is the certainty of a doctrine that one cannot present in public without having to fear for the faith of the listeners?

Bossuet himself seems to have experienced this sort of trouble in speaking with restraint in the presence of believers about the rights of the Vicar of Christ, on the occasion of his solemn discourse on the Unity of the Church at the opening of the Assembly of 1682. In this famous discourse he spoke magnificently of the rights of the Apostolic See; but he intermingled several Gallican restrictions which produced a dissonance with the rest. In a letter to Cardinal d'Estrées, the king's ambassador to Rome, he admits the difficulty of the situation, all the while expressing the hope that he acquitted himself of the task well enough. Here are his words, which are worth noting carefully: "All that one could say, quite strictly speaking, is that it is not necessary to stir up these matters so often, *and especially in the pulpit and in front of the people*; and on this count *I would blame myself*, had the situation not forced me, and had I not spoken in a manner which, surely, far from scandalizing the people, edified them." (*Lettre XCVI. Oeuvres complètes. Édition Lebel, tom. XXXVII.*)

In reading this eloquent discourse, one in fact realizes the skill which Bossuet employed in it, but the terms of the letter which I have just cited express only too well how dangerous it can be for the faithful people to present Gallican doctrines in the pulpit. Could it not be because they injure the sense of being Catholic? What a serious objection to them!

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always shown for it. We see it nowadays, and people have seen it in every age. Some individuals, in whose eyes the pope and the council amount to nothing, who gladly blaspheme them both, will heap praises on the Declaration of 1682 and will never be able to compliment you enough, so long as you have the unfortunate idea of placing the council above the pope and of selling the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff at bargain rates.

Thus, by a strange phenomenon, there is a spontaneous manifestation, among believers, of the desire to hear the authority of the Vicar of Christ exalted, and in the city of error, of a marked benevolence toward those who propagate ideas which tend to diminish his power and his importance in the eyes of those who believe. This twofold fact remains indisputable, and so it seems that, without even mentioning the express demonstrations of support which are taking place at this moment on the part of a considerable number of the faithful, we must regard as a sure thing the approval with which the Christian people would receive the doctrinal definition of papal infallibility.

## **VI. The consensus of the Saints officially recognized by the Church, as to the doctrine of the infallibility of the pope, favors the definition of this doctrine.**

There is no doubt that the Church produces saints and that one must see in them manifestations of the grace of the Holy Spirit Who made them holy, and put them upon a candlestick so that they shine to all the Church. We have reason, therefore, to study the manner in which the saints agreed to think on questions pertaining to doctrine; the law was more perfect in them than in others, and so we can derive from their thinking a higher rule, which corroborates and even surpasses in dignity the conclusions to which scholarly investigations lead us in another way.

Bishop de Sura assures us that the personal infallibility of the pope was denied by a great number of saints during *ten centuries at least*.<sup>80</sup> We have seen above quite a rich collection of testimonies that are favorable to the inerrancy of the Apostolic See of the Roman Pontiff, from Saint Irenaeus in the second century down to Saint Theodore the Studite in the ninth. Now almost all of the passages that I compiled were written by saints who are honored as such by the Church. Would Bishop de Sura like to produce for us the name of *one single* saint, during that entire period, who maintained that the pope, when teaching the Church *ex Cathedra*, is not infallible in his teaching? Let him bring forward just one name; we only ask to know what it is.

80. Tome II, page 367.

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While waiting, to so many splendid names that adorn the preceding pages I will add, for the ages subsequent to the eighth century, those of Saint Bernard, Saint Thomas Becket, Saint Bonaventure, Saint John of Capistrano, Saint Anthony, Saint Lawrence Justinian, Saint Thomas of Villanova, Saint Francis de Sales, Saint Vincent de Paul, Saint Alphonsus Liguori. Who would not feel at ease in the company of these friends of God? How could anyone believe that they erred concerning the rights of the Vicar of Christ? And if they did not err, why not hasten to accept their teaching?

Opposite these men whom we venerate upon the altars, we perceive first in the camp of the adversaries of papal infallibility all the enemies of the Church who betrayed her from within: Fra Paolo, Marc-Antony de Dominis, Simon Vigor, Richer, Ellies Du Pin, Quesnel, Febronius, Pereira, Tamburini, Ricci; so much for the doctors.<sup>81</sup> As for those who wage war on the Church from without, I will recall the names of Pithou, Dumoulin, Servin, Talon, Gilbert de Voisins, without overlooking Maulrot, Camus, and the other drafters of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy; so much for the avowed

81. The memory of Gerson, one of the leading lights of Gallicanism, is still venerated in that School. They tout his piety; but piety, if it is not joined to purity of doctrine, is not enough to justify man in God's eyes. It is a matter of record that Gerson's writings are replete with propositions that duplicate the doctrines of Wycliffe. The intentions of this doctor may have been upright, but it is all too evident that his fixation on the council drove him into theories about "*the Church represented*", so that by and by he completely lost sight of the Church herself. As proof of this, I will cite this passage about holding a council and about those who are qualified to convoke it.

After teaching that the emperor has the right to do so, in lieu of the pope, he hypothetically considers the case of a vacancy in the imperial throne. "Then," he says, "the convocation devolves [first] upon the kings and the princes. In their absence, it returns to the Communes [= French townships] and to the temporal Lords. If, *per impossibile*, there were none, the right would revert to the bourgeois, then to the peasants, and finally to the least little old lady. Yes, the universal Church can find its salvation in the least little old lady. Just as at the time of Christ's Passion, it was

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enemies of the Church's liberty. Now I ask you, would not the Catholic *sensus communis*, in and of itself, lead a believer to the side where the saints are, if only to avoid the unfortunate company of these men who are indeed, it is true, enemies of the infallibility of the pope, but who compromise so peculiarly those who throw their lot in with them?

saved in the Blessed Virgin, so too, for the salvation of the universal Church, the convocation of a council can take place through the most insignificant old woman." *"Dixi quod ad Imperatorem in casu praesenti convocatio Concilii videatur pertinere; quod si non sit, devolvitur haec convocatio ad Reges et Principes primo, post ad Communitates, et alios Dominos saeculi. Quod si non essent, in casu possibili, devolvetur ad cives, et rusticos post, usquequo deveniretur ad minimam vetulam. Sicut enim universalis Ecclesia potest salvari in minima vetula, ut factum est tempore Passionis Christi, quia est salva facta in Virgine Beata; sic ad salvationem universalis Ecclesiae, posset convocatio Concilii fieri per minimam vetulam."* *De modis uniendi ac reformandi Ecclesiam*. [On the ways of uniting and reforming the Church]. Opp. tom. II, col. 189. Édition d'Ellies Du Pin.

It is common knowledge that Louis XIV refused to grant permission for the Works of Gerson to be printed, and that the doctor Ellies Du Pin published them at Anvers in 1706. It is the same with Gerson as with other authors: those who vaunt him the most are the ones who know him the least. By virtue of the same rule, other authors are rejected the more vehemently, the less people take the trouble to read them.

## **VII. The teachings of previous ecumenical councils have prepared the way for the explicit definition of the infallibility of the pope.**

One of the fundamental methods of historical theology is to ascertain first, for each point of dogma that has been determined by an explicit decision, the precise time at which this definition was issued. As I pointed out to the reader in the third *Objection to the book by Bishop de Sura*, if we come across certain acts and certain words, in the time prior to the definition, which seem to contradict it in some way, we must interpret them in a favorable sense, if possible, or correct them by the definition, if necessary. From the time of the definition onward, however, it is only a matter of weighing the terms of the judgment and of accepting it as it is, with the obvious consequences resulting from it.

The errors that have arisen in the bosom of the Church have often summoned her to give an explicit formulation of her previous faith. As for the dogma which has as its object the authority of the Roman Pontiff, the revolt of the Greek Church naturally and necessarily furnished the occasion to make it the object of a special definition containing the substance of what the Church believed previously. Thus the faith concerning the rights of the successor of Saint Peter – that faith which we have seen applied constantly in the Church's practice and professed so explicitly in the language of the Fathers of the first eight centuries – received its

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official expression in the definitions of two councils: the second Council of Lyons and the Council of Florence; definitions which were not only issued by the Latin Church, but also accepted and signed, on both occasions, by the representatives of the Greek Church.

Here, to begin with, is the solemn formula published in the Council of Lyons; I quote from it only those lines that are related to the present question:

“The Holy Roman Church possesses the sovereignty and the full primacy and principality over the entire Catholic Church, and it truly and humbly acknowledges that she has received it, with the fullness of authority, from the Lord Himself in blessed Peter, Prince and Head of the Apostles, of whom the Roman Pontiff is the successor. And just as this Church, more so than all the others, has the duty of defending the truth of the faith, so too, when questions about the faith arise, it is by her judgment that they must be defined.”<sup>82</sup>

We see by the terms of this definition, which are so solemn and precise, what the Roman Church is in the constitution of the Catholic Church; but in order to prevent hypercritical minds from developing a theory in which they would seek to separate the Roman Church from the Roman Pontiff, as though the prerogatives identified here were not necessarily to be understood as belonging to them both, *it has pleased the Holy Spirit* that the definition of the Council of Florence, in expressing the same Roman prerogative, would apply all the conditions to the pontiff in person. Here

82. Ipsa quoque sancta Romana Ecclesia summum et plenum primatum super universam Ecclesiam catholicam obtinet; quem se ab ipso Domino in beato Petro apostolorum Principe sive vertice, cujus Romanus Pontifex est successor, cum potestatis plenitudine recepisse veraciter et humiliter recognoscit. Et sicut prae caeteris tenetur fidei veritatem defendere: sic et quae de fide subortae fuerint quaestiones, suo debent iudicio definiri. – Labbé, tom. XI, col. 966.

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are the explicit terms of this definition:

“Furthermore, we define that the Holy Apostolic See and the Roman Pontiff have the primacy over the entire world; that the same Roman Pontiff is the successor of blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles; that he is the true Vicar of Christ, the Head of the whole Church, the Father and Doctor of all Christians; and that our Lord Jesus Christ gave to him, in blessed Peter, the full power to feed, rule and govern the universal Church, as it is contained in the very acts of the ecumenical councils and in the sacred Canons.”<sup>83</sup>

Let us examine now the import of these two decrees of faith with respect to the infallibility of the pope. What is the state of the question after the councils of Lyons and Florence?<sup>84</sup>

We have just seen that it is an article of the Catholic faith that, when there are questions in matters of revealed doctrine, “it is by the authority of the Church of Rome that they must be defined.”

If the See of Rome did not enjoy infallibility in matters of faith, could it define questions of doctrine? Obviously, no; since a definition that is not infallible could not end a debate

83. Item, definimus sanctam Apostolicam Sedem, et Romanum Pontificem in universum orbem tenere primatum, et ipsum Pontificem Romanum successorem esse beati Petri principis Apostolorum, et verum Christi Vicarium, totiusque Ecclesiae Caput et omnium christianorum Patrem ac Doctorem existere; et ipsi in beato Petro pasce, regere, ac gubernandi universalem Ecclesiam a Domino nostro Jesu Christo plenam potestatem traditam esse; quemadmodum etiam in gestis oecumenicorum Conciliorum, et in sacris Canonibus continetur. – Labbé, tom. XIII, col. 515.

84. Rev. Professor Döllinger has looked for arguments to weaken the authority of the decrees of Lyons and Florence, but in vain. These two councils, together with the doctrinal documents which are part of them, have been received by the entire Church; there is no turning back. The Council of Florence, in particular, had some difficulty in gaining authority in certain localities, because it had been convoked in opposition to the Council of Basel, which for a long time had its partisans, because of the doctrines that it represented. But for a long time now there is universal agreement. It was the same situation with the fifth and the seventh councils: their authority was only gradually established, but as the obstacles disappeared, it ended up being firmly rooted in an irrevocable way. Today no one could contest the ecumenicity of the decrees of these two councils, of Lyons and Florence, without breaking with the Catholic Church.



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about the faith. On the other hand, the Council of Lyons obliges us to believe that the Roman Church, by its judgment, terminates every doctrinal question; the conclusion that follows immediately, therefore, is that the Church of Rome can never err in matters of faith.

We have seen likewise that the Roman Pontiff is, by virtue of the institution by Jesus Christ, “the Doctor of all Christians”. Obviously two consequences follow from this: first, that the pope has the right to teach all Christians; second, that all Christians have the duty to receive with submission the teaching of the pope. Now, if the pope is not infallible in matters of faith, then Christians are obliged to judge his teaching first of all, instead of receiving it with docility, and the pope loses his character of universal Doctor. Now we have just seen that it is an article of the Catholic faith that the pope has this character of universal Doctor; common, everyday logic requires us, then, to conclude that the pope, when teaching from his lofty chair [*ex cathedra*] cannot err in matters of doctrine.

The remaining conclusion to be drawn from all this is, that if the ecumenical council which will soon begin judges, in the Holy Spirit, that the moment has arrived to define as a dogma of faith the infallibility of the pope, it will do nothing more than bring forth in other terms the doctrine included in the doctrinal Decrees of Lyons and Florence; just as the sixth council, in defining the two wills and the two operations in Jesus Christ, merely applied the definition rendered at the Council of Chalcedon on the two natures of the incarnate Word. Whether it was a matter then of the two wills in Jesus Christ, or whether it is a matter today of the infallibility of the pope, no new truth appears at all; it is the same truth, which is demonstrated in a more distinct manner.

## **VIII. Scope and conditions of the infallibility of the pope.**

The premonition of an imminent definition concerning the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff, while stirring the hearts of the faithful children of the Catholic Church who want nothing more ardently than to enter ever more fully into the possession of revealed truth, seems to have caused anxiety for some, as though it were a question of an event capable of producing regrettable or even dangerous results. It was necessary for carelessness with regard to all precise doctrine to reach present levels in order for such misunderstandings to become possible.

The main thing lacking in all these men – who are so light-weight that one does not venture to call them bold, despite the airs that they put on – is an understanding of what the Church is, even though they naively believe themselves to be her defenders. If they had taken the trouble to read and to meditate on Catholic doctrine, instead of bending the little of it that they know to fit the secular systems of liberalism which govern their whole lives, they would have relied on the Holy Spirit, Who animates and governs the Church and can neither permit her to define error nor allow her to speak at the wrong moment. Their strange, novel language gives the impression that they believe themselves to be in the presence of a constitutional government, which is conducted and regulated by means of the press and an opposition party. It does

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not enter their mind that the ecumenical council, that is, the Church, is immediately subject to the divine action when she is about to render a decision in matters of doctrine, and that it is entirely unnecessary to worry. The Holy Spirit blows where He wills and when He wills; it is our duty to await His breath with all possible respect. We know in advance that His oracles cannot be in contradiction to the faith previously professed in the Church; but each time that these oracles are uttered, a new splendor illumines our dogmas, and so we experience a joy which is as intense as it is humble.

In the camp of the anxious, the question can be heard: "If the pope is declared infallible, on what points will we have to recognize him as such?", and with that, they're off investigating a thousand hypotheses which disturb them and with which they try to disturb others. Yet the answer to their question is quite simple. Do they know what the scope of the Church's infallibility is? I wouldn't bet on it; however that may be, Catholic theology would tell them, if they wanted to consult it, that the Church is infallible in her teaching on revealed truth, whether dogmatic or moral, and that in mixed questions pertaining to both the supernatural order and the natural order, it is within her purview to make the decision with a supreme authority. This, no more and no less, is the scope of the Church's infallibility. Anyone who does not admit this has ceased to be a Catholic or else has never been one.

Therefore if, as a result of a definition, the faithful of the Catholic Church find themselves obliged henceforth to profess explicitly the infallibility of the pope, they will have to understand this infallibility, as to its object, to have the same meaning and scope as that of the Church herself. Since the Church does not claim infallibility in matters beyond those that have just been enumerated, the Roman

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Pontiff would be under no obligation either to extend his divine privilege beyond those same matters. Thus it was to no purpose that the authors of the manifesto in the *Correspondant* indulged in all sorts of speculations about the inordinate behavior that might be observed in a pope who had been declared infallible. First of all, if you are talking about personal conduct and actions, they are beyond the terms of the definition, since it is not a question of *impeccability*, but rather of infallibility in teaching. Are you talking about doctrinal decisions? If so, the infallible pope is in exactly the same situation as the council. If the Decree issued by one or the other were beyond the scope in which infallibility is exercised, then it would no doubt be worthy of respectful attention, but it would not bind Christians to give intellectual assent as a matter of faith.

One of the strangest fears that is manifested in the article of the *Correspondant* to which I am alluding, and which has been propagated everywhere beyond the review from which it was taken, is this: If the Roman Pontiff is declared infallible, we will be inundated with articles of faith that nobody was counting on. People will start rummaging in all the archives of the Papacy, and they will set forth, as so many infallible decisions, a thousand forgotten or unknown things that can be found there.<sup>85</sup> There is reason to be amazed at such simplemindedness in men of such real talent and of such extraordinary intelligence in human matters; how can it be that they are so unacquainted with matters of religion that they fall into reveries of this sort?

A little study of the question would have taught them that, in every century, the Roman Pontiffs have issued judg-

85. See the little work entitled: *Le Concile* ["The council"], *Extrait du Correspondant*, October 10, 1869, pp. 33 ff.

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ments in matters of faith, and that these decisions have always been received with submission in the Church; that they have been compiled chronologically in collections which are authoritative expressions of our faith; and that any ancient decision which had not been promulgated in the Church at all, besides having the disadvantage of arriving a bit late, would also run the risk of being inauthentic. Therefore let them be perfectly at ease; the archives of the Catholic Church are in order. Everything that has emanated from the Apostolic See has been promulgated at the proper time. I would only advise them to obtain a copy of the collected doctrinal acts published in the Church since the Apostles' Creed. They would learn many useful things from it, particularly the fact that both before and after the definition of papal infallibility, the Roman Pontiffs have constantly acted in questions of faith as though they were infallible; which is a strong argument to prove that they are in fact infallible.

Well, then, there is no difficulty in determining the object of the pope's infallibility; it is the same as that of the council's infallibility. Now, what are the conditions in which the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff is exercised? We have reason again to give the same answer. The decisions of the council are infallible when they are rendered *conciliariter* [in the manner of a council], and those of the pope are infallible when they are rendered *ex Cathedra* [from the Chair]. Everything that the council or the pope might say or do does not necessarily involve infallibility. In order for an obligation to exist for the faithful to give the assent of faith to the doctrinal Decree of a council, it is necessary that the terms of this Decree indicate the intention to oblige. In the series of councils, the form of the decrees has varied continuously, from the Symbol or Creed, as at Nicea

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and Constantinople, to the Canons preceded by Chapters, as at Trent; but the intention is always plainly evident in the terms, and no one can be mistaken about it.

Likewise, we must distinguish in the pope between the private doctor, who gives his opinion without investing it with any formal solemnity, and the infallible Teacher of all Christians who speaks from his lofty apostolic Chair. The conditions for a pontifical decree *ex Cathedra* have been summarized perfectly, in agreement with the monuments [historical documentation], by Gregory XVI in his excellent treatise entitled: *Il trionfo della santa Sede* ["The Triumph of the Holy See"], which he had published before his elevation, and which went through several editions, under his supervision, during his pontificate. It does not matter whether it is a Bull, a Brief or a Decree, provided that it makes the promulgation; but the pope must manifest his decision to the Church by a direct act, announcing the intention to pronounce upon a question and to command the submission of faith, denoting as heresy the contrary opinion, and thundering anathema against those who would maintain that opinion in the future. The terms may vary, but these are the conditions for the Decree of faith pronounced *ex Cathedra*.<sup>86</sup>

As for the other conditions enumerated by various authors as necessarily accompanying these, either they are

86. To give one example, we can cite the Bull defining the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. The words *heretic*, *excommunication* or *anathema* are not found therein, but they are represented by equivalent terms. In speaking of the opponents of the truth that he has just defined, Pius IX pronounces in the following manner: *Ii noverint se circa fidem naufragium passos esse* [They shall find that in their faith they have suffered shipwreck]; shipwreck in the faith being a synonym of heresy; *et ab unitate Ecclesiae defecisse* [and that they have abandoned the unity of the Church]; which is tantamount to saying that they have lost their communion with the Church. Knowledge of the sources, which is indispensable for every theologian, quickly familiarizes the reader with these stylistic variants.

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common to the council as well as to the pope – such as the condition of preparing the decision by study and previous deliberation – or else they are religious expedients, such as prayer, and apply to everyone. The Scholastic authors who have advanced them gave too little thought to the fact that it would be at least very difficult for the faithful to be sure that the one who defines, the council or the pope, has carried them out faithfully. Therefore it is by the contents of the defining act, whatever it may be, that the Church knows with certitude the intention of the one who speaks and the extent of the obligation that is being imposed.

## IX. Whether a decision in favor of the doctrine of the infallibility of the pope is opportune.

The first pages of this work were already written and sent to the printer, when the volley of His Excellency, the bishop of Orléans, against the expediency of a definition concerning the infallibility of the pope, came to join the one which Bishop de Sura had aimed against this infallibility itself. I believe that I have given Bishop de Sura a sufficiently factual answer by proving that, since the infallibility of the pope is based on the Church's most profound thinking from the earliest centuries and confirmed by her constant practice, the definition is sufficiently well prepared thereby and presents no theological difficulty. Therefore the expediency of this decision must now be demonstrated, in order to respond to the objections raised by Bishop d'Orléans.

But first of all it is fitting to insist once more upon *religious peace*, to the reestablishment of which Bishop de Sura has dedicated his book, and to repeat what was said earlier, that nowhere in the Church is peace disturbed by the subject of the Supreme Pontiff's prerogatives. Never has the respect been deeper, the confidence more wholehearted, and this tranquility has not been altered in the least by these recent publications which have caused surprise and a certain sadness among believers, but have only quickened even more their desire to see the council take advantage of such a great occasion in order to honor suitably him whom the Church of



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our day salutes, as Saint Augustine once greeted Pope Saint Melchiades [= Miltiades], with this deserved encomium: “O most excellent man, O child of the Christian peace! O Father of the Christian people!”<sup>87</sup>

The first consideration, the only one, indeed, with which the popes and the councils have been concerned in previous definitions, has constantly been the benefit of the Christian people. To increase the sum total of revealed truths is to widen the horizons of the faith; it is to glorify God, the revealer, and to fortify the Church which lives on truth. In order to hope for such a dear and precious outcome, it is enough for the dogma awaiting publication to exist already in the Church’s profession of faith – and who could deny it in this instance, when we find it in the Fathers, throughout all these passages of their writings which would become inexplicable if they did not signify that the apostle Saint Peter continues to be present together with his prerogatives in the Apostolic See; when we see the Church defer constantly to the doctrinal judgments of the Roman Pontiff, with no fear of endangering, by an imprudent or premature submission, the faith which is the first of all goods; when we see the opinion contrary to the infallibility of the pope described to the faithful as a dubious belief of which they must beware, if they wish to preserve all the niceties of orthodoxy?

Is it not time for the Church, the interpreter of the Scriptures, to bestow upon Christians the fullness of light on the passages of Saint Matthew, Saint Luke and Saint John, which some try to restrict in their meaning, whereas the general opinion of the faithful explains them in the

87. O virum optimum, o Filium Christianae pacis, et Patrem Christianae plebis! *Epist. xliiii Ad Gloriam et Eleusium*, cap. v Opp. tom. II, pag. 95.

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widest sense? Must we allow these paltry subterfuges to remain until the end of the ages, these childish distinctions between the *See* and the *person*, between *infallibility* and *indefectibility*, whereby isolated teachers have sought to belittle what God has made so great and so simple? Must we procure for the heresies that spring up in the intervals between one council and the next – heresies that Rome has condemned – the scandalous resource of appealing to a future council? Must we then believe that the Founder of the Church did not think to furnish her with an expeditious, lasting and sure means of discerning the truth from error?

As long as the judgment, which will advance the doctrine of papal infallibility from the status of an evident theological conclusion to that of a Catholic dogma, has not yet been rendered, what purpose will be served by all these grand words that are heaped up to describe the successor of Saint Peter, and which make unthinking or careless people believe that those who speak in this way are professing a sincere doctrine? Exalt with your rhetoric as high as you please the Chair of Saint Peter; but allow us then to ask you whether the doctrinal judgments which emanate from it are unchangeable in themselves. The Christian people want a true Vicar of Christ, a Teacher of all Christians, whose decision puts an end to all controversy, who judges everything and who is judged by no one. He is the one whom believers find in the Gospel, he it is who is described for them by the Decrees of the ecumenical councils of Lyons and Florence. What good are pompous formulas and protestations, if by your theories (which all the enemies of the Church have applauded) you reduce this divine monarchy, this full Principality to little more than an instrument in the hands of

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what you call the *sovereign body*? Thus, in the seventeenth century, Port-Royal exalted the divine mystery of the Eucharist, published with striking effect *La Perpetuité de la foi* [The Permanence of the Faith] on this dogma against the Calvinists, and then by the insidious theories of the book *De la fréquente communion* [On Frequent Holy Communion] ended up making practically useless this masterpiece of the love and power of the Redeemer.

They deserve to be heard at last, these Fathers of the Church who have so often celebrated the Roman faith as being inviolable, that cloud of witnesses who from century to century have affirmed the immortality of Peter on the Apostolic Chair; and this phalanx of Scholastic doctors, who have patiently and laboriously scrutinized our dogmas and proclaimed the infallibility of the Supreme Pontiff as the final conclusion of their investigations; and these innumerable bishops succeeding one another from century to century in their sees, respectfully handing on to their people the oracles of the Apostolic See, as soon as they are issued, professing by their words and by their conduct, with the French prelates of 1653, that “the judgments rendered by the Supreme Pontiffs in matters of faith possess an authority which is divine as well as supreme throughout the Church.”<sup>88</sup> To be sure, it is a good thing today, in the presence of this august tribunal which will be held near the place where Peter witnessed [with his blood], that the faithful of the Church, recalling the evils spawned by the theories of a Pierre d’Ailly or a Gerson, have the right to repeat in complete confidence these powerful words of Saint Augustine: “Against so many thousands of Bishops throughout the world whom this error

88. See above, page 20.

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has displeased, must we heed the authority of fifty or seventy others?"<sup>89</sup>

The bishop of Orléans would like to restrain this enthusiasm. He dreams of an ecumenical council which would not be encouraged at all from outside by the voice of the Christian people, begging the bishops not to spare error. He is scandalized by the ardor of their insistence and the simplicity of their wishes, and although he affirms that he is not taking sides in the question concerning the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff, the discussion takes him further than he would like to go, and he gives us to understand clearly enough that this belief does not have his complete sympathy, for the moment at least. In any case, as is pointed out with both authority and moderation by His Grace, the Archbishop of Malines [= Mechlin], after such an outburst against the expediency of a definition – which, as we can say with scientific certainty, has attained its maturity and is awaited on all sides – it becomes rather difficult for this definition to take place.

We must not hide the fact that the entire Catholic Church and its authority are in jeopardy in this grave question. The bishop of Orléans cannot deny that, in every age, the doctrinal decisions of the Holy See have been accepted immediately, as terminating controversies about the faith without appeal. Where did this universal submission come from, if not from a deep-seated conviction as to the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff? If the successor of Saint Peter does not possess this prerogative, then has the Church's faith run such great risks without her even suspecting it?

89. *Contra tot milium Episcoporum quibus hic error in toto orbe displicuit, curanda non est auctoritas quinquaginta vel septuaginta aliorum. Contra Cresconium*, lib. III, cap. iii.

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What Catholic could ever admit that? What is asked of the Church in a council, if not to affirm herself by proclaiming the motive for her conduct during so many centuries? For a long time her practice itself was sufficient, because within her, in divine concerns, *de facto* is the equivalent of *de jure* [a matter of fact has the same value as a matter of law], as we have already had the occasion of recalling. In her condescension she at first tolerated a speculative discussion of the question; soon she authoritatively restricted the scope of that discussion; and while the controversy was at its most spirited, she took measures, during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, against the errors of the times by means of papal judgments which designated these doctrines as heretical. Since then, the reasons which stirred up these debates (which at bottom were entirely political) have dissolved, a free rein has been given to theology in the one country where these contrary views had thrived, and where Catholic instincts often arose to drive them back. Peace reigns, and after so many battles France, like the other Catholic nations, hopes to profess without restriction the privilege of Peter. If a few individuals still protest, we know that their heart is Catholic first and foremost, and that no resistance on their part would ever arise against the voice of the council commanding the submission of faith concerning this doctrine, as with every other article of faith.

But what would be the consequences of abandoning the question, when so many arguments and facts have prepared the way for a solemn solution of it in our days? Who cannot see that the results would tend to belie the opinion of so many Fathers of the Church, of so many teachers of Scholasticism; to invalidate, moreover, the actions of the Church, which has so clearly put into practice her convic-

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tion concerning the inerrancy of the one who is for her the Vicar of Christ. No, the pope has too often been reputed to be infallible for him not to be so; holiness, genius, the voice of the people, and the authority of the pastors have recognized him as such too often for him not to have this gift; and, that being the case, postponing the day for proclaiming resolutely what God has done, what the Church has lived and will live by until the end, would be an immense misfortune.

The bishop of Orléans sees the definition of papal infallibility as a barrier to the reunion of the Eastern Churches with the Roman Church; this is a completely illusory argument. The schismatic patriarch of Phanar is not going to wait to make his return to the Catholic Church until the inerrancy of the Roman Pontiff is or is not defined at the Vatican Council. Probably, before coming to this article of faith, it remains to be seen whether he admits that the bishop of Rome has the Principality, both of honor and of jurisdiction, over the entire Church. Let us first find out, then, whether he and his colleagues in Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem are well disposed to signing the agreement reached between the two Churches at Lyons and at Florence. If so, we can be confident. After having acknowledged that "questions about the faith which arise must be defined by the judgment of the Church of Rome," and that the Roman Pontiff is "the Teacher of all Christians," there is little doubt that they will yield as well with regard to the logical consequence that follows from the decrees of these two councils. After all, it is certainly not the infallibility of the pope, but rather the supremacy of the pope, combined with various reasons (political and otherwise), which is keeping them out of the Church.

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Is it necessary for the council to abstain from making a definition so as not to impede the return of the Protestants to the Church? The bishop of Orléans thinks so. By that reasoning, the dissident communions of the East, on the one hand, and the sectaries of the sixteenth-century Reformation, on the other, constitute obstacles to the Church's freedom of speech. In order to deal with her adversaries, she will have to remain silent and prevent the "good word" that she was about to utter from passing her lips!<sup>90</sup> There lies in chains that teaching infallibility with which she was divinely endowed for the sake of her children! Some voices could be heard using this sort of language on the eve of the definition of the Immaculate Conception; was Rome alarmed by it? Indeed, when we recall the great enthusiasm with which the entire Church acclaimed the apostolic oracle, we can estimate what an immense loss, in terms of the glorification of God and the advantage of the faithful people, would have resulted from a silence which surely would not have been reciprocated on the part of the heretics.

The bishop of Orléans makes much of the fact that, during the Council of Trent, several points of doctrine were hotly debated without any definition being made in their regard, for example, concerning the nature of the duty of residence for pastors in charge of souls. A solution was urged by one side and the other, less on account of the question itself than because of the far-reaching consequences that a definition would have entailed. After interminable debates the council Fathers desisted for the sake of peace; but may we point out to the bishop of Orléans that no one claims that every question raised in a council must neces-

90. Psalm 44:1.

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sarily be resolved by a definition. The majority of the Fathers, with the help of the Holy Spirit, makes the decision; so it has been in all the councils.

Yet the questions to which the prelate alludes were questions debated among Catholics. As for the connections that the decisions of Trent would necessarily have with heretical doctrines, by defining the faith on certain points where it had to cut to the quick, it appears that this is not the place to recall the conduct of that holy assembly, if one insists on maintaining that a definition is opportune only if it does not repel dissidents. This question of expediency played a considerable role in the history of the Council of Trent at its opening under Paul III and when it resumed under Julius III and Pius IV, so we should recognize that it is not new. At that time, too, there was no lack of voices crying out to the council Fathers: "Reform the Church, draw up disciplinary decrees, but make as few advances as possible with respect to dogma. Otherwise you will drive the Protestants to all sorts of extremes, by making them feel that the door of the Church is henceforth closed against them." And who offered this advice to the council? The princes who had remained Catholic, headed by Charles V, who by means of their ambassadors asserted strong reasons of State, mingled with eloquent recommendations concerning charity. The Fathers appreciated these counsels of high-level politics, and their response was to dedicate themselves immediately to the study and the definition of the dogmatic questions raised by the heretics, while at the same time dealing secondarily with the reform of discipline.

After issuing the Decree on the Canon of Scripture (a Decree which separated forever the Catholic Church and the reformers on a fundamental point), the council addressed the



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formidable question of Justification, on which more than one bishop, more than one cardinal of that time, harbored ideas that would be rudely contradicted in the Decrees of the Sixth Session. To act in the interest of truth is the first and foremost expediency for a council; the history of all the councils that have been held is there to demonstrate this.<sup>91</sup> Someone or other is going to be upset about what the heretics will think if the pope, whom they do not recognize, is declared infallible, and it does not occur to him to wonder what they will say if the council hesitates to proclaim the infallibility of a tribunal which the Church, in practice, has never ceased to consider as being immune to error. It seems that, as long as one is consulting heretics for the first time as to the suitability of a doctrinal decision, it would be appropriate to choose a subject in which the Church's responsibility is not already involved. Moreover, we can abide in this matter by the decision of His Grace, the Archbishop of Westminster. No one is in a better position than this illustrious prelate to appreciate the effect that a definition of papal infallibility would have on the Protestants, and it is well known that he is far from worrying about it.

91. The bishop of Orléans proposes to the Vatican Council the example of the Council of Trent which, in one of the Canons of the Twenty-fifth Session, gave to one of its definitions an indirect turn of phrase, which took nothing away from the truth defined therein, but which treated cautiously the inveterate prejudices of a Greek-Uniate populace, for whom the ambassadors from the Republic of Venice had requested special consideration. Supposing that the Vatican Council, imitating this condescension, promulgated a Canon in this form: *If someone says that the Church is in error, when she teaches that the Roman Pontiff is infallible, let him be anathema*, would the bishop of Orléans find the interests of Gallicanism sufficiently safeguarded? Yet this would be a discreet gesture of the same sort as the one employed by the Council of Trent in Canon 7 of the Twenty-fourth Session. I doubt that the partisans of inexpediency would declare themselves satisfied, even with this mitigation. Since the bishop of Orléans deliberately cited this fact, it was necessary to examine it thoroughly. It is evident that a council can show condescension within certain very strict limits.

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Another obstacle to the definition, according to the bishop of Orléans, is the aversion which the governments of heretical nations and even rulers of Catholic countries would feel, when they learned that the pope is henceforth declared infallible in his teaching. The reason for this given by the eloquent prelate is that more than once the popes, by virtue of their spiritual power, have made dispositions regarding crowns and States, and that naturally such a way of acting is bound to inspire revulsion. It is easy to answer this scruple. It is quite simply a matter of asking the bishop of Orléans to see whether it is before or after the definition of their infallibility that the popes have acted in this manner. Now it is well known that the facts in question predate this definition, which has not yet been made. Therefore no argument of inexpediency can be derived from this against a declaration that the Vatican Council might make in favor of the infallibility of the pope.

Besides, the argument would go beyond the intentions of the bishop of Orléans; for the ecumenical councils themselves (whose infallibility is not our concern here) have made dispositions, just like the popes, concerning the temporal rights of governments through Decrees included in their Acts. Even at Constance and at Basel there were no scruples about doing so. The bishop of Orléans, while trying to compromise the future definition vis-à-vis the governments, did not notice that he would render suspect in their eyes the very act of holding an ecumenical council.

Getting to the bottom of the question, the prelate asks himself, from the perspective of the governments, “Who, then, will prevent a new pope from defining that the Vicar of Christ has a direct power over the temporal affairs of princes?”<sup>92</sup> Would the bishop of Orléans be so kind as to

92. Letter of His Excellency the bishop of Orléans to the Clergy of his diocese, page 30.

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permit me to ask him what would happen in the case where an ecumenical council went so far as to pronounce this same definition! The infallible council and the pope, acknowledged to be infallible, are in precisely the same situation. If such a decision by the council is impossible, how could it become possible through the pope? Since the infallibility in either of them proceeds from one identical source, that is to say, from the help of the Holy Spirit, we should therefore be perfectly at ease with regard to the definitions that one or the other could eventually promulgate. These definitions could only have revealed truth as their object; we are assured of this in advance.<sup>93</sup>

Let us add that it is not serious scholarship to take into consideration the misunderstandings caused by ignorance and bad faith. First of all, as I have just said, it was in the

93. Following Bishop de Sura, the bishop of Orléans affirms that the brief inclusion of the *Controversies* of Bellarmine in the *Index*, by order of Sixtus V, was probably motivated by a thesis which the illustrious theologian formulated therein against the *direct* dominion of the pope over the crowns. That is simply a bit of seminary lore, and I defy anyone to cite an author who is at all serious to justify this assertion. We know only that the highly meritorious accomplishments of the learned controversialist had earned him the envy of some. They took advantage of Bellarmine's absence on several occasions, when he had to carry out various missions entrusted to him by the Holy See, and spread troublesome rumors in Rome against his great work. They said that it assembled, in the objections, the entire arsenal of the Reformation against the truths of the Catholic faith, that the responses of the author were often very weak, so that as a whole it was pernicious rather than useful. Some went so far as to put forward the name of Cardinal Du Perron, claiming that he had evaluated the *Controversies* in this way. We have a letter by Cardinal de Joyeuse, to whom Bellarmine had protested, and another by De Perron himself, both addressed to the learned controversialist, in which both of them assure him of their most lively sympathy and declare their profound esteem for his work. Yet the blow had been struck. Upon his return to Rome, Bellarmine saw his *Controversies* listed among the books that could no longer be read without permission. He endured magnanimously this trial, which was of short duration. The cardinals of the Congregation of the Index soon met again, and before saying anything to Bellarmine, they decreed that his book should be erased from the list of prohibited authors, so that this eclipse lasted scarcely two years. This is the truth about this incident, which is only an accident in the history of censoring books.

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past that popes passed judgments deposing princes; the present question, therefore, has no connection with that. In the second place, the deposition of a prince by the pope, or by a council, I might add, is neither a dogma nor a dogmatic fact; the infallibility of the pope or of the council is in no way involved. I imagine that a definition in the next council of the power of the Church, pope or council, over the temporal affairs of sovereigns is out of the question; and if this power, *per impossibile*, were the object of a dogmatic definition, the exercise of such power would have no connection whatsoever with the infallibility of the pope or of the council in the teaching of doctrine. The power to remit or to retain sins, which our faith acknowledges that the priest has in administering the Sacrament of Penance, does not imply the legitimacy of all the sentences that he pronounces. His authority is divine; but in exercising it, he can make right or wrong use of the incontestable right that he has to bind or to loose.

Let us then, first of all, set aside the unthinking and impassioned prejudices which might be conceived by those governments having a constitution founded on theoretical and practical heresy. The dignity of the council does not allow us to suppose that it would take as its rule their desires or their aversions. As for the Catholic governments, I mean to say, those founded on Christian law – and some did exist at the time of the Council of Trent – I have just recalled how that holy assembly judged that it was not obliged to make allowances for either the urgings or the threats by which the still-faithful sovereigns wished to compel it to remain silent about the faith and to dedicate itself exclusively to the reform of discipline. If it is a question of governments which today are set over practicing Catholic populations, but ruled

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by constitutions which are outside of Christian law, then the Decrees of the ecumenical council will bind the faithful in conscience nonetheless; but since these governments are no longer obliged to accept them and to promulgate them as the law of the land, by what right would they be concerned about their purpose and their terms? In these countries, the alliance of the Church and the State still exists in their reciprocal external relations; but the State no longer carries out the functions of the bishop regarding external matters. It understands this new situation, and it has sensed that the presence of its ambassadors at the council would be an anomaly today. Besides, what umbrage could it take, if the council defines that Saint Peter teaches the faith infallibly by the mouth of his successor? The infallible words of the successor of Saint Peter have always gone out to all the earth, and no power has even been able to fetter it. Any measure taken along these lines today would be in vain, and would backfire on its instigators. Do we not have reason to hope, instead, that the magnificent spectacle that the council will present, by its combination of order, subordination and freedom, a useful lesson for governments and nations, that it will be a model for an ideal, of which modern societies have lost every vestige, the guarantee of heavenly blessings which will produce a progressive pacification among peoples? The council, let there be no doubt, will garner the respect of the entire world; and if its decisions contradict some prejudices, the majesty which will surround it, in these days when all majesty is vanishing, will assure it in advance of a consideration which will be salutary for the human race.

The bishop of Orléans expresses also the fear that the definition of papal infallibility might deprive the Episcopate of something of its dignity. It seems that there could be no

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foundation for such a fear; for if the council defines, its definition cannot be anything other than the truth, and the revealed truth. How could the truth be contrary to the right of anyone? The bishop of Orléans thinks that, if the definition is issued, the bishops will no longer be the judges of the faith. This is to forget that the decision, if it should take place, would proceed from the judgment of the bishops themselves, judging with the Supreme Pontiff, and *ipso facto* judging infallibly. Is there anything more magnificent? But if the bishop of Orléans means to say that, when a dogmatic constitution is issued by the pope *ex Cathedra*, the bishops no longer will be able to judge it, we will reply that they never have had that power; and it is for that very reason that the definition of the pope's infallibility presents so little difficulty. It would simply hallow the Church's practice. Saint Augustine, when he received the Letters from Saint Innocent, did not set about the task of judging them; he was content to exclaim: "The case is closed." If the bishop of Orléans wants to understand the matter along the lines of the letter sent by Cardinal de Noailles, the six archbishops and five bishops to Clement XI in 1710, that is, if he has acknowledged "that he does not have the right to investigate the decisions of the popes in order to make himself their judge; that he only wants to confront such decisions with the opinions which he has about the faith," then the definition of infallibility could not possibly be at all to his detriment; everything will be reconciled by itself.

Let us turn now to the faithful, whom the bishop of Orléans mentions, too, lamenting their fate if the definition is promulgated. These are the kind of believers who are quite willing to accept the judgments of the Church when they are made by the pope together with the bishops, but who would

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be shocked if anyone taught them that the case must be closed when the pope alone makes a judgment. In their eyes this would be “something extraordinary, abnormal, a perpetual miracle, and something quite different from the miracle of the Church’s infallibility”. I am not so sure what sort of believers the bishop of Orléans is speaking of here, but it is a safe bet that something is lacking in the instruction that they have received. Someone forgot to teach them that Our Lord prayed specifically for the faith of Saint Peter, so that it would not fail. They are unaware of the fact that Peter lives and speaks in his successor, in whom he is the Teacher of all Christians. They do not know that an ecumenical council, held in France yet, has taught that if questions about the faith arise, they must be resolved by the judgment of the Church of Rome. Does it not seem that, instead of holding up their ignorance as a rule for a council as to what it must or must not do, it would be charitable to correct and instruct them. If only someone had impressed upon them the maxim of Saint Irenaeus, bishop in second-century Gaul, that all the faithful, in all places, must adhere to the doctrinal Tradition of the Church of Rome because of its “higher Principality” [or “commanding position”], then they would have only one desire: that of knowing this doctrinal Tradition in order to be in conformity with it.

Fortunately the Church has other believers than those, and we will be in a position to verify this if the council inscribes papal infallibility among the dogmas which Catholics are obliged to believe explicitly.

The bishop of Orléans also says: “if it were possible for the adherence of the *teaching body* to contribute nothing at all to what is essential for a doctrinal judgment, how will the faithful understand that this teaching body teaches?”<sup>94</sup>

94. Letter of His Excellency the bishop of Orléans to the Clergy of his diocese, p. 52.

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For the simplest of reasons. It will be enough for them not to confuse the idea of judgment with the idea of teaching, and that will explain everything. The teaching Church no longer has to judge truths that are already defined; she teaches them, nevertheless, and that is why she is called the teaching Church. A judgment is made by the Church teaching, in a council, headed by the pope; there is but one and the same judgment, and the question is resolved. Because the teaching Church is indivisible, it is the duty of the teaching Church, then, and not of the *teaching body*, to administer doctrine to the faithful people. If Peter, from the height of his Roman Chair, pronounces a decision in his active infallibility, the episcopate adheres to it with submission in its passive infallibility, and the defined truth becomes the object of universal teaching.

But, says the bishop of Orléans, “if the pope is personally infallible without the Bishops’ concurrence, then in the eyes of the faithful the Bishops seem to be, no longer voices in the Church, but mere echoes.”<sup>95</sup> I admit that I have trouble understanding the difference between a voice and an echo in the Church. What is the teaching Church, if not the echo of the words of Jesus Christ? What is the pope speaking *ex Cathedra*, if not the echo of that divine word? Moreover, does not our Lord tell us that when the Holy Spirit Himself comes, the soul of the Church, “He will teach you all truth. For He shall not speak of Himself, but what things soever He shall hear”?<sup>96</sup> Therefore, if the believers in whose name the bishop of Orléans is speaking do not want the bishops to be *echoes*, but *voices*, it means that they expect from them something that is, at bottom,

95. *Ibid.*

96. John 16:13.



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their own. Now we have just seen that the Holy Spirit Himself only repeated what He has heard in the ineffable concert of the three Divine Persons. What is astonishing to these good believers, then, is to hear their bishop repeat simply what the pope has taught; but when Peter says to Jesus Christ: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God," could the Apostles have done any better than to repeat what Simon Bar-Jona, had just said? For ultimately, according to the Savior's own testimony, "neither flesh nor blood had revealed the answer to Peter, but rather His heavenly Father, Who suggested it to him."<sup>97</sup> Now, if the inerrancy of the Roman Pontiff is decreed by the council, if the confidence which the Church has always had, of hearing these same words of Peter in the Roman Pontiff, comes to be formulated as a dogma, I wonder in what way the believers of the bishop of Orléans could be injured to see their bishop serve as an echo of Peter, when Peter Himself is only the echo of the Holy Spirit repeating the truth that is in the Father's bosom?<sup>98</sup>

The bishop of Orléans insists: "The faithful," he says, "instead of hearing several witnesses in a doctrinal decision, will hear only one of them. True, this witness is the principal witness; but the faithful until now have not believed that the pope was the only witness in the Church."<sup>99</sup> One can respond that the faithful of whom the bishop of Orléans speaks are not wrong; there are several witnesses in the Church; but one would have to agree at the same time that when the case is closed, there is no further need of witnesses. If it is decided in council with the pope presiding, the witness given by the bishops in their own name and in the

97. Matthew, chapter 16.

98. John 1:18.

99. Letter of His Excellency the bishop of Orléans to the Clergy of his diocese, p. 53.

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name of their Churches is united to the witness of the Roman Pontiff, who speaks in the name of Peter and in the name of the Church *Mater et Magistra* [Mother and (school-)Mistress], and these various witnesses form the basis for the unique definition made in the name of the pope with the approval of the sacred council. If the pope makes the pronouncement by virtue of his personal infallibility, as Saint Peter spoke in the region of Caesarea Philippi, the witness of all the Churches is included in his, because the Spirit that animates the entire body helps and guides him.

All this will perhaps seem somewhat mystical to the faithful of the bishop of Orléans who are a bit under the influence of naturalism, but so it is. Touch the head of the Church, touch her members, and everywhere you will encounter the same life. It follows that the witness of the Roman Pontiff, when he makes a definition, expresses the faith of all the Churches and, at the same time, that of the Church of Rome. This is put quite admirably in the passage from Saint Augustine that I cited earlier: “What else could Blessed Innocent reply to the African councils,” he writes to Julian, “but the doctrine which from earliest antiquity the Apostolic See, the Roman Church professes uninterruptedly with the other churches?”<sup>100</sup> The pope, outside of a council, holds the office of Peter; but Peter, the ruler of the Church, is not in the least isolated from the Church; not that he receives from her the grace of truth, but the same Spirit that animates the whole body influences the members as members. Under His influence, Peter will not teach any other truth but that which resides in the body of the Church, and the principal members of the Church (that is,

100. See above, page “103” [page # to be adjusted for new edition]. *Contra Julianum Pelagianum*, Lib. I, sec. xiii.

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the bishops), aside from the infidelity of a few that is always possible, will adhere to the decision of the ruler by the action of the same Spirit.

This is how a definition is made, how it becomes the common property of the whole teaching body, which is united to it by submission, and not by an independent judgment which, if it were possible, would be contrary to the unity of the body. This comparison between the unity of the Church and the unity of the human body is exact and is part of the deposit of revelation, since it was given to us by Saint Paul and has been the subject of a thousand eloquent and profound commentaries by the Fathers, especially by Saint Augustine. In reflecting upon this comparison, one realizes that there are occasions when the entire body is united with the head in the same action, and other occasions when the head itself notifies the members of its will, and they obey, if there is life in them; it is easy to apply this to the Church.

To apply a human or worldly perspective to divine things is fatal. Anyone who considers the two orders, the natural and the supernatural, will easily grasp the relation between them: the first was destined by the Creator to be transformed into the second, of which it is often the type or figure. But it is quite different when men, having warped their minds in a thousand proud schemes or futile calculations, create for themselves a standard that they take seriously – liberalism, for example, or what they call progress; when, I say, they are silly or, if you prefer, stupid enough to want to compare Christianity with these sorry productions, dreaming of impossible alliances and unwittingly going so far as to risk both logic and faith in the same shipwreck. Thus it will be a triumph for them when political power in human society is considered to come exclusively from below, when monarchi-

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cal authority is recognized only on the condition that there is some form of representation which will render it impotent for either good or evil, when social perfection is equated with the eradication of the principle of obedience by making each individual participate in the sovereignty.

Now this is what is happening. Some men, saturated with these ideas to the point where they do not see that experience itself dooms them to failure, forget to put them aside when they are confronted with the divine constitution of the Church. They are willing to have a Papacy, but on the condition that its power is balanced by that of the Episcopate. They are willing to have the pope pronounce decrees concerning the faith, but on the condition that the bishops verify these decrees before they acquire any legal force. They accept a ruler over the Church, but as an executive power, since there should no longer be any other. Those people, naturally, hearing talk about the personal infallibility of the pope, unfailingly exclaim: That'll be the end of representation in the Church! – as though it had been revealed to them that their political ideas are the eternal pattern from which the Savior Himself could never deviate.

Besides, we can tell from the very expressions used by these believers who are protected by the bishop of Orléans, what they are thinking. Speaking about the period of time that has elapsed since the Council of Trent, and during which the Supreme Pontiffs have decided questions of faith, just as they have done in every age, as we have seen above, here is how they express themselves: “Thus, by exercising alone the highest of the prerogatives which Jesus Christ bestowed upon His Church, the Papacy absorbed as well all the credit and all the influence that the episcopate lost. The balance of powers established by divine right in the Church was inverted by the

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sole fact that the bishops, having ceased to be the pope's associates in judging the faith, were reduced to the function of interpreting the thought of a superior, often becoming mere instruments of transmission. This voice of the chief pastor, resounding alone in the silence of the Church, with the voice of the bishops being raised only to echo it – what could be more suited to lend credit in the minds of simple people to the false opinion that the entire Church resides in the Papacy alone? What better way could there be of changing in their view the original and grandiose character imprinted by Jesus Christ upon the monarchy that He founded: a monarchy which is a living body, in which the head receives from the members as much life as it imparts to them, etc.”<sup>101</sup>

Naturalism has spoiled certain minds so much, that those who wrote these pages did so without suspecting that they were going contrary to the Catholic faith. Such escapades are useful, however, for giving a glimpse of the secret ravages wrought by error beneath the vagueness of belief and under the aegis of good faith. The only thing lacking in these men of talent and conviction is to have taken the trouble to study what they talk about. With their political utopias they believe that they are experts on all questions, including the divine question. And so there they are, busy creating the Church *a priori*. They agree that the work of Jesus Christ is *original* and *grandiose*; let us see how they justify their evaluation. It is, they say, *a monarchy which is a living body*. Certainly this is the first time that it has been said that *a monarchy is a body*. I do not know whether we can affirm that such a monarchy would be *grandiose*; but there is no disputing that it would be quite *original*, since, in order to form a concept of it, one is forced to renounce all traditional ideas of what constitutes a

101. *Le Concile*, excerpt printed in the *Correspondant*, October 10, 1869, pages 41-42.

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*monarch* and the *body politic*. But the worst thing yet is that such a utopia is contrary to the faith. To confuse within the Church the head with the members, the Papacy with the Episcopate, is to reverse the Roman prerogative, the personal principality of the pope, which consists of the *fullness of dominion* over the entire body. Such is the faith of the ecumenical councils of Lyons and Florence.

Similarly, to pretend that in the Church “the head receives from the members as much life as it imparts to them,” is likewise to destroy all Catholic notions. The [supernatural] life of faith is produced by the Holy Spirit, in virtue of the promises of Jesus Christ, by means of the action of the head upon the members, so that there might be unity in the Church. The members possess this life of faith, provided that they remain united to the head, but they do not produce it in the head. The decree of Florence teaches that the pope is the *Teacher of all Christians* without exception; it is contrary to the faith to say that Christians, even the bishops, are the *teachers* of the pope.

Have they reflected seriously, then, these writers who claim to be Catholic and who tell us that the Papacy, in defining the faith without the concurrence of a council, *absorbed all the credit and all the influence that the episcopate lost*? How can they, too – knowing so many things – overlook the fact that the Second Council of Lyons teaches in its profession of faith that “if controversies about doctrine arise, they must be decided by the judgment of the Apostolic See”? Apparently Jesus Christ understood it to be so when He founded His Church; unless the *Correspondant* prefers to say that the Council of Lyons was mistaken, and the Church has been mistaken for six centuries in rendering submission to that council. To hear them speak in this way

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about the absorption of the credit and influence of the episcopate by the pope, one would say that these gentlemen have gone to the wrong address, and that they think that they are arguing with the ministers of Napoleon III against the drawbacks of personal government.

To please them, it would have been necessary for the popes, during the first three centuries, between the general councils, and during the time that has elapsed since the Council of Trent, to have refrained from defining the faith against the heretics; or else, once they had pronounced a definition, for them to have sent it, sealed, to all the bishops of the world, with the request to return it after confirming it. Thanks to this procedure, the eloquent editors would have found that the credit and influence of the episcopate had not been absorbed. This fine system has three drawbacks. First, it has never been employed in the Church in eighteen centuries. In the second place, it is hardly an expeditious means, we must admit, for uprooting heresies; especially since the responses might well be unsatisfactory at times or insufficiently clear. In the third place, this system, if indeed it would restore the episcopate, would have the disadvantage of annulling the Papacy, upon which Jesus Christ nevertheless built His Church. Every bishop, in effect, would qualify to serve as the center of this epistolary council.

Thank God, things do not happen this way in the Church. Outside of a council, once the Roman Pontiff, whose faith cannot fail, has spoken from his Chair, some bishops, such as the bishop of Hippo and so many others whose testimonies are cited above, did not consider themselves dishonored in the least by being the *instruments for transmitting* the apostolic message, by being its faithful *echoes*. As for the *balance of powers* in defining a matter of

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faith, I admit that I cannot imagine what it might consist of; for ultimately what are we talking about on such an occasion, if not about teaching revealed truth infallibly? What do powers, *balanced or not*, have to do with such a matter, as though it were a question of framing a law or a constitution? Here it is a question of only one thing. Did Jesus Christ reveal this, or did He not reveal it? Balance the powers as much as you please, but I don't see what difference that will make in that definition, which consists of declaring a fact, and in declaring it in an infallible manner. The Holy Spirit alone will bring about the decision; the whole question is knowing by whom He will speak.

Will He speak by the bishops? If you tell me "yes", I will ask you whether it is necessary for the bishops to be unanimous. You will be obliged to answer in the negative; for history, after all, teaches us that this unanimity has not always existed, far from it. In the case of a division, I will ask you, on which side is the true faith? Of course you will have to answer that it is on the side that the pope takes. What becomes then of your balance of powers? By your own admission, the pope weighs more than the bishops, if the side which he favors is necessarily the one where the Holy Spirit is found. Therefore in the pope there is an element that is not found in the rest of the episcopate, considered apart from him. Now this is the element which we call infallibility; but speak no more about a *balance of powers*. Say with us that, outside of a council, active infallibility is in the pope, and passive infallibility is in the episcopate or that part of the episcopate which adheres to the pope's judgment, and say no more that "the head receives from the members as much life as it imparts to them."

All this is quite far removed, I agree, from political constitutions; neither are we dealing here with human



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affairs, but simply with knowing the truth which God has revealed to men. The important thing is that we know it, and when it has been declared by him, for whom Jesus Christ prayed that *his faith fail not*, and whom He ordered to *confirm his brethren*, then let us say: Honor to his brothers, the Bishops, who in the Church are the *instruments for transmitting this voice*, who are its faithful *echoes*! Let us celebrate the infallibility of the Body that proceeds from the infallibility of the Head. Let us glorify the Holy Spirit Who, through various degrees of influence, works this wonder, in which we see the human element transformed and attaining the divine privilege of infallibility.

Elsewhere the writers of the *Correspondant* seem to accept the method of definition by the pope, by reason of the circumstances. "In the absence of councils," they say, "and when it is impossible to convene them, there is no one who disputes that the pope has the duty to be the spokesman who defends the faith, which cannot endure without testimony; and no one denies, either, that the judgments issued by virtue of the Pontifical Chair, whether or not they be infallible in their origin, can acquire, by the *tacit assent* of the Church throughout the world, a power that raises them above all discussion."<sup>102</sup> We see that the writers have deliberately not taken into account the profession of faith of the Council of Lyons, which teaches that controversies must be settled by the judgment of the Apostolic See, a judgment which, in order to be valid, has no need of the tacit assent or of the Church throughout the world. I continue the quotation: "Thus in the last century, at the request of the Church and also of the kings of France, Molinos and Jansen were condemned, along with all the nuances of their errors, and there is nobody today

102.*Ibid.*, page 39.

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who would call into question the irrefutable value of the papal decrees which defined, in opposition to these false teachers, the true nature of divine love and of sanctifying grace.<sup>103</sup> Therefore it is quite true that in fact, for three hundred years, all questions of faith have been resolved by the judgment of the Sovereign Pontiff, without any previous concurrence by the bishops of the Church. Not one of these questions was debated anywhere but in the Roman congrega-

103. I will not quibble about these dates, nor about the factual details. It was in the seventeenth century, and not in the eighteenth, that Molinos was condemned by Innocent XI, without any *request of the Church* or of the king of France; but I cannot help pointing out, as an indication of the frivolousness with which these writers treat matters of religion, their statement here that Jansenism had *sanctifying grace* as its subject, whereas everyone knows that the heretical theories of this sect were aimed against the Catholic doctrine on *actual grace*, which is certainly quite different. It cannot be repeated too often: this "School" has never taken the trouble to learn even the historical facts about the dogmas of the faith. So it is that, in a polemic with one of its leaders, I had to comment on the incredible assertion that Our Lord did not speak Greek. So it is that many times in the *Correspondant*, while listing the pious personages who were shining lights in seventeenth-century France, someone presumed to mingle the names of the nuns of Port Royal with those of the saints of that epoch.

104. The Roman congregations, which are like various Ministries of the Church's government, are not consulted at all when there is a question of defining a matter of doctrine. The Congregation of the Holy Office is the only one that deals with matters of faith. When the pope prepares a definition, it is ordinarily done in a special commission of cardinals and theologians.

The *Correspondant* wants to take advantage of a passage by Fénelon in his book on the authority of the Supreme Pontiff, where he expresses regret that the popes of modern times have dropped the ancient custom of their predecessors, who would convene the Roman council composed of the bishops of their primacy and in those gatherings would pronounce their definitions in matters of faith. In fact this happened frequently; but these Roman councils had nothing ecumenical about them, and the *Correspondant* is wrong to cite Fénelon here in support of its thesis.

Besides, we must say that, if the popes still observed this custom, the opponents of the decisions made in this way would not fail to complain about the exclusively Italian composition of these councils, just as others reproach the Sacred College for always electing the pope from among the Italian cardinals.

As for quoting Fénelon, as several pretend to do today with regard to the pending question, it would be desirable for them to take the occasion to study his solid discussion in favor of papal infallibility. They would find there the wherewithal to correct more than one false idea, and the readers of the *Correspondant* in particular would no doubt benefit from learning that the great Archbishop of Cambrai should be included among the Ultramontanes. But today there is an art of using silence, and it is by no

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tions.<sup>104</sup> Thus the pope had become not only the supreme judge but, in a sense, the sole judge of the faith, because he was the only possible one.”<sup>105</sup>

As you can see, this is still the same concern, the same prejudice about the necessity of councils. Their mind is so impressed by the idea of the States General, of deliberating assemblies, that they can't understand that councils have never been the expression of a law [*de jure*], but only matters of fact [*de facto*]. All of them, nevertheless, are the products of circumstances, and except for the tiny Council of Basel, which had such an unfortunate conclusion, not one of these assemblies was convened in order to put an end to the personal rule of the pope. Until the year 325 one does not even find the idea of an ecumenical council, and when it manifested itself, no one in the Church imagined that the episcopate was reclaiming the legal rights which the successor of Saint Peter had absorbed until then. All of that is new and does not hold up in light of true scholarship in Church history. Government of the Church by the pope is the rule; councils are the exception. The usefulness of the councils in their own time is beyond doubt; except in the case of a dubious pope, they have never been a necessity.

A council, when it is in session, represents the Church; it is above everything, because in it the Roman Pontiff takes the place of Jesus Christ, Whose Vicar he is. It is the Cenacle made visible, and it is understandable that

means one of the least effective methods of propagating false ideas. Before the unfortunate division which gave birth to so-called *liberal Catholicism*, we all held in common the profound and luminous writings of Joseph de Maistre. The beautiful book by Balmès was received ecstatically. For twenty years now a veil has covered these great names; no longer are they invoked in the articles of the *Correspondant*. It is easy to guess the reason for this. One does not refute such men; therefore it is better to have them forgotten. They will revive, however: have no doubt about it.

105. *Ibid.*, page 40.

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the great Innocent III, presiding over the Sixth Lateran Council, began his speech to his Brothers, the Bishops with these magnificent words of the Savior to His brethren,<sup>106</sup> the apostles: *Desiderio desideravi hoc Pascha manducare vobiscum, antequam moriar* ["With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you, before I suffer." Luke 22:15.] It is a Paschal feast in which authority and freedom, unity and truth prevail; so that those who do not coalesce with the council deviate from it by themselves, as history has shown, starting with Nicea. But once again we emphasize that not all centuries have had this sublime vision of the Church gathered together: Jesus Christ, Who established the Papacy, did not institute the councils. When they take place, they are the manifestation of the Church which He established; and the reason that the council has a right to the respect and submission of the faithful is that the council is the Church. Let us return to the article from the *Correspondant*.

We have seen that it said that "the pope had become . . . the sole judge of the faith, because he was the only possible one." The article continues as follows: "No one could complain about it nor accuse him of usurpation. All Catholics, on the contrary, had to consider themselves fortunate that, in the midst of the Church's trials, the truth had, in the popes, defenders who were always alert and always on duty."<sup>107</sup> Certainly, if we needed any new arguments for the expediency of a decision, such statements could serve the purpose quite well. Here we have, then, some Catholics who have come to the point of thinking that the power of making definitions in questions of faith

106. John 20:17.

107. *Le Concile*, excerpt printed in the *Correspondant*, October 10, 1869, page 39.

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devolved upon the pope by dint of circumstances, and they have the incredible naïveté to tell us that, during this provisional period, he pulled through honorably. But where do they come from, these strange Catholics who do not know that the Apostolic See teaches permanently in the Church, that the councils, while they are in session, suspend neither his right nor his duty to do so, and that they have validity only after he confirms them?

Let us listen to them again. “But it is still the case that the entire dogmatic authority had passed in this way to the See of Rome, and that by allowing this state of affairs to continue (and no protest was raised against it), the Papacy – if it had reckoned, as a human power, only with its own interests and stature – had everything to win and nothing to lose.”<sup>108</sup> Hearing such language, it is easy to see that the editors of the *Correspondant* are still thinking of the old French monarchy, and that they are chiding it at the moment for neglecting to convene the States General; but in applying to the Catholic Church the criteria of their secular politics, they sometimes end up taking positions that are singularly ingenuous. They actually admit (and this proves their good faith, at least) that *no protest was raised against . . . this state of affairs*. Could anyone make them understand that this *state of affairs* is simply the one that Jesus Christ Himself established, by making Peter’s faith firm and by commanding him to confirm his brethren? Of the eighteen centuries that the Church has lasted thus far, this *state of affairs* has prevailed during more than seventeen. We are perfectly well aware, then, that it did not cause any protests, except perhaps for the appeal to the future council by the opponents of the Bull *Unigenitus*. But let us

108. *Ibid.*, page 45.

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admit that the compliments paid to the Holy See, for not abusing this so-called “interim” authority, are evidence of a disdain which would be all too reprehensible among Catholics, were it not excused by the illusions in which others have entangled and kept them.

Therefore we are disposed to look for extenuating circumstances on their behalf, when we hear them using language like this: “By personally unbinding the lips of the Universal Church; by restoring on his own initiative [*motu proprio*] to the episcopate the highest, yet most often forgotten of its prerogatives, Pius IX made it evident that, if he has nothing to fear from his brethren, he does not want or no longer wants a grandeur that was acquired at their expense.”<sup>109</sup> If these imprudent words were to be taken seriously, we would have to admit that before the convocation of the Vatican Council the *Universal Church* had *bound lips*; that the pope possessed a *grandeur acquired at the expense of his brethren*; that Pius IX *does not want or no longer wants* this usurped grandeur. Thus the promises of Jesus Christ were incapable of preventing the Universal Church from being struck dumb, contrary to its divine institution! The Holy Spirit was unable to fulfill His mission upon earth! Such are the conclusions to be drawn from the assertions of these bewildered, misguided writers. And all of this is spouted with an appalling good faith. Are we not correct in saying that these writers labor under a fatal misconception? But what remains of the faith in minds that placidly admit ideas which are so contrary to the most basic notions about the Church?

Listen to them again, in this same manifesto of their Review, on the subject of the council. Usurping the role of

109. *Ibid.*, page 29.

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legislators in the Church, they venture to require for the council's decisions a *moral unanimity* of votes. By what right, I ask you, when the Gallican theologians themselves teach that the majority of bishops united to the Supreme Pontiff constitute the infallible tribunal of the Church, without any need to look for a *moral unanimity*; by what right, I say, do they go beyond the faith of their own teachers to set limits upon doctrinal infallibility? Why haven't they been studying on their own? Many realities that they do not even suspect would be revealed to them, and they would finally understand that one must leave the narrow circle of journalistic ideas in order to arrive at a respectful understanding of the faithful believer.

There is one thing, among others, that no one has told them: the fact that infallibility in a council does not proceed from the knowledge of one council father, nor from the sanctity of another, nor from the activity of a third. It is a supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit. Considering the matter naturally, neither the pope nor the council is infallible. The Holy Spirit alone makes them so, and this infallibility resides in the decrees issued by the council. When these decrees are issued and have been confirmed by the pope, they are completely valid, and no one has the right to refuse them their assent. The time has then passed for the excuse that one has not sufficiently heard so-and-so. So-and-so contributed no more than a fallible element, and the Church requires an infallible result. She knows that this result has been obtained, that it is sealed. She accepts it as part of her faith and marches joyously toward eternity, with one more ray of light in her halo of truth. Heretics have always said that the councils which condemned them were not just, that they were not free, that they did not study the matter suffi-

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ciently. The Church lets them talk, she records the new council at the proper place in her annals, and acknowledges it unto the end of the ages. What did Fra Paolo *not* say against the Council of Trent? Pallavicini published triumphantly, though belatedly, the justification of that holy assembly and completely overturned the calumnious assertions of that apostate. While awaiting this victorious apology, the Catholic Church enjoyed, in peace, the happy results of the Council of Trent and cared very little for what her enemies said and repeated.

I have just mentioned the name of Pallavicini; this brings me back to the *Correspondant*. They quote on its pages this famous historian, and they take that occasion to articulate the strangest idea. Here is the situation: In the preparatory congregations for the Twenty-third Session, it became evident that there was little agreement among the Fathers on the question concerning the source of jurisdiction in the Church. Pius IV, desiring that a matter of such great importance be decided only to the satisfaction of everyone, wrote to his legates not to be content with a majority vote on the question, but to declare that the decision would only be made by a unanimous vote of the Fathers. This departure from conciliar procedures was applied only to certain matters treated during the Twenty-third Session. It had no other reason for existing than the will of the pope. There had been no question whatsoever about it during the first twenty-two Sessions; it was not recalled during the Twenty-fourth nor in the Twenty-fifth and last Session; there was even a decision made against the opinion of a third of the council members. No matter; the *Correspondant* assures us: "In what pertains to the mutual relations between the pope, the council, and the bishops, there is a *jurisprudence established*

110. *Ibid.*, page 28.



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*at Trent*, from which the Vatican will surely not deviate.”<sup>110</sup>

One wonders whether these gentlemen are speaking seriously. An *established jurisprudence*! – and that, because the pope, once, communicating in a dispatch to his legates, wished that a question be decided unanimously, or else that there be no decision. Really, these Gallicans, when they need the pope, assign him one of the best singing parts. No; the discreet conduct of Pius IV, in a momentary incident during the Council of Trent, does not constitute an *established jurisprudence*. Outside of this incident, I repeat, the practice of the Council of Trent itself, as well as that of previous councils, was quite different; and there is no reason to think that the Roman Pontiffs have any intention of changing the ancient custom of voting by a strong majority, as opposed to the custom (which is too ambitious for human weakness) of accepting only a unanimous vote.

I will only add one more thing on the subject of the vote by acclamation. We know that it was discussed in a newspaper article that was criticized, perhaps with good reason. The *Correspondant* is indignant about the matter, and one senses that the supreme misfortune, in its view, would be a council that proceeded by acclamation in the decisions that it made.<sup>111</sup> According to good theology, how-

111. The elasticity of liberal doctrines here is quite remarkable. Since 1789 [in France], the Constitutions which have succeeded each other in turn are based on the principle that a simple majority in a political assembly makes the law, and here we have learned journalists who want to introduce the principle of moral unanimity. This shows once again that utopians easily abstract from human nature in their theories. If they require this high degree of perfection only from a [Church] council, we would like to see them explain the grounds for being so demanding; otherwise, they are liable to see the council operating according to ordinary procedures. Bishop de Sura does not go as far as the gentlemen of the *Correspondant*. He states bluntly that if the pope does not accept the advice of the *large majority* of the council, the council has a right to depose him and to have another one elected. The consequence is that the *large majority* of the council, and not a moral unanimity, decides everything in the council.

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ever, any decrees issued following a vote by acclamation, and confirmed by the pope, would have as much sway over the conscience of Catholics as those which had been made after a long discussion. An acclamation by the entire Church in a matter of faith would be the voice of the Church, and the Church does not speak without the Holy Spirit.

At bottom, it is easy to understand that the editors of the *Correspondant* are a bit anxious that they might see the Vatican Council condemn the Gallican teachings. They demand that the council Fathers *measure* and *weigh* each of the *words* and *syllables* of any judgment that might be passed against “a doctrine which is perhaps inexact, but which has been professed publicly in the Church for centuries by men who are a credit to her.”<sup>112</sup> For my part, I think that we should have a blind faith in the wisdom of a council directed by the Holy Spirit; but it is beyond me that these Gentlemen should want to place the Vatican Council, defining the faith as opposed to the Gallican teachings, on a par with the councils of Nicea and Constantinople proclaiming the Trinity of Divine Persons against Arius and Macedonius. They tell us: “Not one of the dogmas promulgated by the councils, not even those which, *being essential to the basis of our religion*, could appear to be the least open to discussion – not even the consubstantiality of the Word or the divinity of the Holy Spirit – was proclaimed without the most deliberate, without the most mature investigation of the controversies which had made either its *import uncertain* or else *its definition necessary*.”<sup>113</sup>

The writers of the *Correspondant* are gravely mistaken here, and relying on such a support can only have ruinous

112. *Ibid.*, page 31.

113. *Ibid.*

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consequences for their system. In order to banish the idea of a decision by acclamation, they prefer to say that all councils, without exception, did not define anything without long and minute examination, and in that they have departed from the truth. It would have been to their advantage to gain a personal acquaintance with the history of each council. They would have seen the various ways in which the divine Spirit has acted upon these sacred assemblies, and how far they are, taken together, from presenting this ideal methodology that they imagine so gratuitously. The essence of the council consists in the enunciation of the Church's thinking; but we must beware of believing that all the councils were convened with the purpose of determining the faith by a decision on a point which could have been disputed until then without incurring anathema.

The motive for convoking the councils has generally been, not necessity, but usefulness: the benefits that would result from such an exalted and solemn testimony. The intention, then, was to strengthen the faith of believers, which the blasphemies and sophistries of the heretics might have shaken. It is a mistake, therefore, to think that before the councils of Nicea and Constantinople, for example, the dogmas of the consubstantiality of the Word and the divinity of the Holy Spirit had only an *uncertain import*, and that a definition was *necessary* in their regard. At that rate, one would have to say that during the first three centuries it had been possible to be a Christian without believing in the divinity of Jesus Christ or that the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person. A moment's reflection will make clear what is erroneous in an idea of this sort, and the study of the monuments [important writings] of this early period gives ample proof that the first Christians adored Jesus Christ as God,

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and glorified the three Divine Persons equally.

It was easy, therefore, at Nicea, not to *define* what was not *doubtful*, but rather to proclaim the earlier faith which was quite evident. No doubt they listened to Arius and his partisans, debated with them, despite the horror that their blasphemies inspired. Some holy Bishops stopped their ears, or uttered cries of indignation; but they soon put an end to that bold denial of the entire past of the Church's faith, by composing a Symbol or Creed in which the word *consubstantial* gleamed like a diamond. Proceeding thus by way of a Creed was ample indication that they did not have a new article of faith to define, but rather that it was good to develop the formula of the apostles, who had baptized all the nations in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Who are equal in substance in the unity of Their nature.

At the Council of Constantinople, where it was a question of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, the acclamation of the Fathers is even more conspicuous. The bishops belonging to the party of Macedonius soon retreated, and historians have not left us the slightest detail about the learned discussions which took place on that subject, as some would later claim. The faith was clear enough, and they made use of the same procedure as at Nicea, by strengthening the Creed composed in that first council, by adding to the article on the Holy Spirit.

There would be much more to say about the ideas which the approach of the council has suggested in the minds of some, and about their preoccupation with the thought of a definition concerning the infallibility of the pope. These differences of opinion in no way hinder the enthusiasm of Catholics, and perhaps God permitted them so as to demon-

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strate the expediency of a formal decision. There is no one, however little instructed in theology, who does not perceive that the venturesome theories that have just been set forth by their very nature compromise the orthodox faith, and who cannot guess the havoc that they can wreak in the high society world of the salons. It is a common rule of human behavior to observe the impression that certain facts and certain phenomena make upon one's enemies, and if they are delighted by them, to consider oneself warned of the danger that is entailed. Is there anything more expressive than the applause lavished these days by the adversaries of the Church on those who, both in France and in Germany, have formulated their unwillingness to see the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff inscribed among the dogmas of the faith? If only the latter could finally realize the state of maturity that this truth has attained, and reflect upon the responsibility that they have dared to take upon themselves, both by combating it more or less directly, and also by seeking to make others share their prejudices against the expediency of the decree which would declare excluded from the Church anyone who refused henceforth to accept it! No one would venture to doubt that, for their own part, they would hasten to submit and assent; but assuming that the definition was made, would they not feel regret at having clouded more than one mind and having fomented opposition that could become fatal to the salvation of some?

How much happier are the millions of Catholics who, relying on the Savior's promises and on the help of the Holy Spirit, humbly wait in faith for the decisions of the great council which will teach them all truth! Nothing will astonish them, nothing will surprise them, because they have that

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faith “which overcometh the world.”<sup>114</sup> They do not cling to any of their own personal ideas, unless it is in absolute dependence upon that faith. When it is a question of the supernatural order, what does it all matter to them: the memories of the tribunal and of the forum, the genius and eloquence of writers, the mundane interests? What they want is the truth, that truth which is not handed down by flesh and blood,<sup>115</sup> nor imprinted by any human nationality, but rather, coming down from the mouth of the Incarnate Word, is found pure and unadulterated in the teaching of His Church, which is ever ancient and ever new.

They know that Jesus, by ascending into heaven, did not leave them orphans, that He sent them another Paraclete or Counselor, Who will abide with them forever. They know that Jesus, in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, is food and life for them until the consummation of the world. They know that Jesus, in the person of the immortal apostle Peter, is their Teacher and Shepherd forever. They know that the Church, the Bride of Christ, is their Mother who has given them birth; that this Church, visibly assembles at this hour in the sublime adherence of the members to their Head, is about to speak, and they accept in advance this word which is the truth and can only be the truth. They know that in this word will be true freedom, that which liberates man from himself and from worldly illusions; for the Lord said: “The truth shall make you free.”<sup>116</sup>

The first Christians understood it this way, and set free by the truth, they dared to battle against pagan society. That society lives again today, inspired as of old by “the pride of life”.<sup>117</sup> It needs to learn a lesson, and the council will teach

115. Matthew 16.

116. John 8:32.

117. 1 John 2:16.

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it. Worldly society will see millions of Catholics listening to the voice of the Church, changing, if necessary, their dearest thoughts according to her teachings, and thus acquiring the strength which nothing can overcome.

Who could doubt, given the divine promises? Who could doubt at the sight of the spectacle that we have before our eyes? When the apostolic voice suddenly resounded, announcing the impending convocation of the great council, people said to themselves: "But who can guarantee the stability of the world for two years? Where is the ground solid enough for such sessions to be held thereon? Will not obstacles arise on every side?" And look today. Under the royal scepter of the Pontiff, the entire human race, represented by its Pastors, is at this moment gathered in Rome. By sea and by land we have watched them arrive, and of all the powers which might have barred their passage, not one has intervened. Respect, among some; amazement, among others, when confronted with a spectacle so new, in a time when individualism is finishing its work of dissolving everything: this is the impression produced by the council, which will remain the greatest event of the century. *Fiant immobiles quasi lapis, donec pertranseat populus tuus, Domine: donec pertranseat populus tuus iste, quem possedisti.* ["Let them become unmoveable as a stone, until Thy people, O Lord, pass by; until this Thy people pass by, whom Thou hast possessed."] (Exodus 15:16).

# Appendix

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### I

#### SANCTISSIMO PATRI INNOCENTIO X. SUMMO PONTIFICI

Beatissime Pater,

Optata pervenit ad nos tandem Constitutio illa, qua Vestrae Sanctitatis auctoritate quid sentiendum sit de controversis quinque Propositionibus, quae sunt excerptae e Cornelii Jansenii Yprensis episcopi libris, perspicue decernitur. Excitatae in Belgio contentiones, flagrabant etiam in Galliis, et latissimum incendium per universas Ecclesiae partes minabantur, ni pesti grassanti et certissimam perniciem allaturae obstitisset Beatitudinis Vestrae indefessum studium, et ex alto petita potestas, quae sola acerrimam illam animorum collisionem compescere poterat.

Agebatur de re magni momenti: de aditu scilicet ad salutem per necessaria christianae gratiae praesidia, et humanae voluntatis adjumentis illis excitatae ac fotae conatus liberos; atque de divina Christi pietate ac beneficentia in universum genus humanum. Hujus doctrinae lucem recentioris illius auctoris disputationibus obscuratam pristino nitori restituit, juxta veterem fidei regulam ex Scripturis et antiqua Patrum traditione, in Conciliis olim et nuper, auctoribus summis Pontificibus constitutam, prolatum a Sanctitate Vestra, postulantibus compluribus Galliarum episcopis, Decretum. Quo in negotio, illud observatione dignum accidit, ut quemadmodum ad episcoporum Africae relationem, Innocentius primus Pelagianam haeresim damnavit



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olim, sic ad gallicanorum episcoporum consultationem, haeresim ex adverso Pelagianae oppositam, Innocentius decimus auctoritate sua proscripserit.

Enimvero vetustae illius aetatis Ecclesia catholica, sola Cathdrae Petri communione et auctoritate fulta, quae in decretali epistola Innocentii ad Africanos data elucebat, quamque dein Zozymi altera ad universos orbis episcopos epistola subsecuta est, Pelagianae haeresis damnationi absque cunctatione subscripsit. Perspectum enim habebat, non solum ex Christi Domini nostri pollicitatione Petro facta, sed etiam ex actis priorum Pontificum, et ex anathematismis adversus Apollinarium et Macedonium, nondum ab ulla synodo oecumenica damnatos, a Damaso paulo antea jactis, judicia pro sancienda regula fidei a summis Pontificibus lata, super episcoporum consultatione (sive suam in actis relationis sententiam ponant, sive omittant, prout illus collibuerit) divina aequae ac summa per universam Ecclesiam auctoritate niti: cui Christiani omnes ex officio, ipsius quoque mentis obsequium praestare teneantur.

Ea nos quoque sententia ac fide imbuti, romanae Ecclesiae praesentem, quae in summo Pontifice Innocentio decimo viget auctoritatem, debita observantia colentes, Constitutionem divini Numinis instinctu a Beatitudine Vestra conditam, nobisque traditam ab illustrissimo Athenarum archiepiscopo, nuncio apostolico, et promulgandam curabimus in ecclesiis ac diocesibus nostris; atque illius executionem apud fideles populos urgebimus. Neque vero poenae deerunt adversus temerarios illius violatores, quae a jure haereticis infliguntur; quibus juxta Constitutionis tenorem, et Breve Sanctitatis Vestrae nobis directum, contumaces omnes, nullo conditionum vel statuum discrimine facto, perstringemus; praesertim cum in Galliis ad episcopos in solidum isthaec cura

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pertineat, ubi nullos haereticae pravitatis Inquisitores constitui patitur, mos antiquus ex jure communi profectus.

Sane spondere possumus Beatitudini Vestrae nihil fore quod Decreto apostolico, nostraeque in eo exsequendo sollicitudini moram afferre possit: praecipue cum piissimus ac christianissimus Rex noster, cui Breve apostolicum una cum exemplo Constitutionis illustrissimus nuncius tradidit, interpellato quoque regiae majestatis praesidio, nos ad illius Decreti executionem, edicto suo ad nos dato, pro ea quam debet Ecclesiae constitutis tuitio, constanter hortetur: et magistratibus universis, atque caeteris sibi subditis, tum ad vim arcendam, tum ad amputandas quae forte possent ab haereseos reis excitari de foro competenti cavillationes, praecipiat, quatenus executionem illam omni studio et operi juvent, atque tueantur.

Quare cum Rex coelestis hac in causa foederatum habeat regem terrarum (si fas ita loqui cum Sixto III), Sanctitas Vestra, per Petrae soliditatem, jam contusis veritatis hostium animis, securos ab omni externa perturbatione de nova haeresi triumphos aget. Porro nos Innocentio X cujus ore Petrus locutus est, ut Leoni I acclamabat quarta Synodus, hanc divinam lauream gratulati, sacros inter Ecclesiae fastos, quod olim de Synodis oecumenicis fieri solitum, Constitutionem istam ab eo editam lubentes ex animo reponemus; cui optatissimam in longaeva vita felicitatem adprecantur, qui sunt cum ea qua par est veneratione,

BEATISSIME PATER,  
SANCTITATIS VESTRAE

Devotissimi et addictissimi filii, Cardinales, Archiepiscopi et Episcopi Galliae in Parisiensi urbe congregati.

*Parisiis die, 15 julii 1653.*

## Appendix

### II

#### CLEMENS PP. XI

#### AD PERPETUAM REI MEMORIAM

*Venerabilibus fratribus Archiepiscopis et Episcopis, ac dilectis filiis aliis ecclesiasticis viris, in Comitibus generalibus Cleri Gallicani Parisiis congregatis.*

Gratulationes vestras, quibus editam nuper a Nobis pro comprimenda inquietorum hominum contumacia Constitutionem excepistis, ex datis ad Nos litteris vestris, magna quidem animi voluptate, cognovimus, novam inde fiduciam concipientes non inanem fuisse laborem nostrum, vosque pro pastoralis vestri muneris debito curaturos, ut extinctis prorsus supremo Apostolicae Sedis iudicio janse-  
niani erroris reliquiis, idipsum tandem sapiant omnes, sin-  
tque perfecti in eodem sensu et in eadem sententia. Verum  
uberem adeo gaudii nostri materiam turbavit admodum  
nonnullarum epistolarum aliarumve scriptionum palam edi-  
tarum delata ad Apostolatam nostrum notitia, quibus nihil  
magis obtendi atque adstrui videtur, quam ut summa dictae  
Sedis auctoritas multifariam impetatur, perinde ac si nullum  
hodie episcopali zelo argumentum dignius occurrat, quam  
beati Petri Sedis potestatem attenuare, unde ipse  
Episcopatus et tota auctoritas nomini hujus emersit.<sup>1</sup>  
Quodque mirandum magis, quin et deplorandum acerbius  
Nobis fuit, tentari haec vidimus eo ipso tempore, quo extir-  
pandis errorum radicibus, quibus Ecclesias vestras infici  
sentiebatis, imploratum a vobis, potestatem vestram plane  
imparem expertis, et ab ipso Christianissimo et religiosissi-  
mo Rege instantius expetitur Primae Sedis brachium et

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auxilium, paterna qua vos Ecclesiasque vestras charitate complectimur, libentissime impendebamus.

Agnovimus in hoc sane consuetas nequissimorum quorundam hominum molitiones, qui dum jansenianum virus quod corde retinent, poenarum metu proferre non audeant, Romanae Sedi, a qua comprimi se maxime sentiunt occultum veluti bellum indicere conantur, ac per importunas quaestiones in Catholicae Unitatis perniciem, dissensionum semina spargere. Vos autem, Venerabiles Fratres, quorum muneris erat inquietos corripere, nimis dolendum est, eorumdem potius suggestionibus cedere, ecclesiarumque turbatoribus non satis advertentes manus praestare.

Quis enim vos constituit iudices super Nos? Numquid inferiorum est de superioris auctoritate decernere, ejusque judicia examinare? Pace vestra dictum sit, Venerabiles Fratres, intoleranda plane res est, paucos episcopos et illarum potissimum ecclesiarum, quarum privilegia et decora nonnisi Romani Pontificis favore ac beneficio constant, adversus sui nominis et honoris authorem<sup>2</sup> caput attollere, ac Primae Sedis jura corrodere, quae non humana, sed divina auctoritate nituntur.

Interrogate Majores vestros, et dicent vobis, non esse particularium antistitum, Apostolicae Sedis Decreta discutere, sed implere,<sup>3</sup> et quandoquidem episcoporum Galliae, sancto Leoni Magno de consensione fidei gratulantium, verba producit, ab iisdem utique discere poteratis, quae vestri similia, quos propterea imitari non pudeat, Antistitum, in recipiendis Apostolicae Sedis definitionibus, partes revera sint: Apostolatus vestri, inquit, scripta, ita ut symbolum fidei quisquis Redemptionis sacramenta non negligit, tabulis cordis adscripsit, et tenaci, quoad confundendos

1. Innocentius I, Epist. ad Patres Concil. Carth. II, anno 417.

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haereticorum errores paratior sit, memoriae commendavit.<sup>4</sup>

Longe ergo olim aberant praestantissimi Galliarum Episcopi ab arrogando sibi jure discutiendi Apostolicae Sedis Constitutiones, quas ut ipsum fidei symbolum recipiebant, nec multum temporis aut sedulitatis impendendum censebant, ut de illarum executione deliberarent; sed satis sibi esse arbitrabantur, si earum tenorem ad confundendos haereticos memoriae commendarent; docebantque insuper (quod vos maxime animadvertere oportet) Romani Pontificis definitiones non ex ipsorum fide dijudicandas, sed potius suam ideo firmam ratamque agnoscebant, quod definitioni Romani Pontificis consentiret. Audite illos sancto Leoni ita subdentes: “Doctrinae, post Deum, vestrae debet quisque fidelis adhaerere, ut constanter teneat quod credebat; debet etiam infidelis, ut a perfidia sua, agnita veritate, discedat, et Apostolicae institutionis luce perfusus, erroris sui tenebras derelinquat.”<sup>5</sup> Haec est Patrum fides, haec Majorum traditio, haec constans veterum Gallicarum, sicut et caeterarum totius orbis christiani ecclesiarum regula, quae quorumlibet demum novis humanorum ingeniorum adinventionibus oppugnari potest, labefactari omnino non potest.

Neque vos ipsos, venerabiles Fratres, praeclara vestra aut sacrarum litterarum peritia, aut in evellendis priscis Ecclesiae monumentis studium, ac diligentia, ignorare patitur, quod “cuncta per mundum novit Ecclesia, quod nimirum Sedes beati Petri Apostoli de omni Ecclesia fas habeat judi-

2. Innocentius I, Epist. ad Concil. Milevitanum.

3. “Nos (Episcopi) qui sacros canones et Decreta Sedis Romanorum Pontificum sub ipsius Apostolicae Petrae iudicio exequimur, nihil aliud quam juste judicantium fautores et justorum iudiciorum executores, obedientiam Sancto Spiritui praestamus, qui per eos locutus est, et Sedi Apostolicae, a qua rivus Religionis et Ecclesiasticae ordinationis et canonicae judicationis profluxit.” (Hincm. Rhem. tom. II, Operum, p. 462). Idem Hincm., ibid., p. 250, alloquens summum Pontificem. “Meum est mea, vobis obediendo, committere, et non vestra iudicia discutere.”

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candi, neque cuiquam liceat de ejus judicare judicio.” Profecto si vel ipsam Apostolicae nostrae Constitutionis formam et quidem non a Nobis recens adinventam, sed a praedecessoribus nostris, longa saeculorum serie, usurpatam observare placuisset, qua omnibus Archiepiscopis et Episcopis Constitutionis ejusdem executionem et observantiam integram, auctoritate Apostolica, praecipimus, commitimus et mandamus, edoceri vel ea satis poteratis, nos, in hac eadem causa, non vestrum consilium exposcere, non rogare suffragia, non exspectare sententiam, sed obedientiam injungere; obedientiam scilicet illam, quam beato Petro Apostolorum Principi, sanctaeque Romanae Ecclesiae, ac Nobis nostrisque Apostolicis Decretis atque Mandatis, in ipso sacrae vestrae inaugurationis limine, solemniter juramento polliciti estis.<sup>6</sup>

Aegre quidem, venerabiles Fratres, in hoc invisio argumento versamur: memores enim tenuitatis nostrae, non ut dominantes in cleris apparere affectamur, sed subditi omni humanae creaturae propter Deum esse cuperemus, atque utinam datum Nobis esset humiliori loco consistere! At vero, cum neutiquam privatam nostram, sed Apostolicae beati Petri Sedis, in qua non immeriti solum, sed et inviti, divino sic disponente judicio, praesidemus, causam agamus, postquam diu multumque studio pacis et unitatis amore tacuimus, pluraque perperam adversus ejusdem Apostolicae sedis jura dignitatemque gesta, charitate Christi quae patiens est, et paterna prorsus indulgentia toleravimus, dum inordinato pravoque processu, impunitate transgressionum, quotidie augentur excessus, et crebrescunt culpaе, quae toleratae sunt studio fidei reparandae et amore concor-

4. Epistola Ravennii aliorumque Episcoporum Gallorum ad sanctum Leonem Papam.

5. Ibid.

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diae, amplius dissimulare Nobis aut silere non licet; locum nempe Unigeniti Filii Dei ac Salvatoris nostri Jesu Christi, quem indigni tenemus in terris; ultra negligere nec possumus, nec debemus.

Videmus enim, Venerabiles Fratres (quod non sine intimo paterni cordis nostri moerore loqui compellimur), plurima in dies, ab iis qui se Catholicos profitentur, palam scribi minuendis, convellendisque hujus sanctae Sedis juribus, ea profecto, ut minimum dicamus, libertate ac licentia, quae nonnisi haeterodoxis Ecclesiae hostibus gaudio, orthodoxis vero piisque scandalo ac luctui, nemini certe fructui ac utilitati esse possint. Iis porro vel ipsa quandoque nonnullorum Episcoporum scripta consentire, nimis deploranda, Nobisque minime ferenda res est, quasi vero eadem Apostolica judicia pro sancienda regula fidei a summis Pontificibus lata, quae, paucos ante annos, divina ac summa per universam Ecclesiam auctoritate niti,<sup>7</sup> omnis Gallicana ecclesia, datis ad praedecessores nostros litteris, palam professsa est, modo fere infirma debeant, ac veluti nutantia reputari, nisi superveniente vestro, paucorum scilicet Episcoporum, iudicio fulciantur.

Currebatis bene, venerabiles Fratres, et praeclare Majorum vestrorum secuti vestigia, ad Apostolicam Sedem, tamquam ad fidei arcem, totius disciplinae Metropolim, et unitatis Catholicae centrum, quo omnium ecclesiarum lineas collimare necesse est, ne alio distortae ruinam inveniant, et ad beati Petri fidem nunquam deficientem,<sup>8</sup> qua haereticorum errores peremptorio decreto prostrantur, fidenter non minus quam humiliter confugiebatis. Quare ergo tam cito

6. "Decreta, ordinationes, sententias, dispositiones, reservationes, provisiones, et mandata Apostolica, totis viribus observabo, et faciam ab aliis observari.... Mandata Apostolica humiliter recipiam, et quam fidelissime exsequar." (Juramentum singulorum Episcoporum in sua consecratione.)

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transferimini pene in aliud Evangelium, ac si fidei arcem, et disciplinae Metropolim ut minus tutam explorare tentetis, lineasque vestras non ad unitatis Catholicae centrum deducere, sed potius centrum ad lineas vestras exigere velle videamini, ac demum beati Petri fidem nunquam deficientem agnoscere erubescatis?

Videte, quaeso, et in conspectu Superni Pastoris, qui nos omnes in veritate sua iudicaturus est, sollicita mente perpendite, num illud sit, quod vestri muneris, quin et honoris esse profiteamini, et in quo Gallos semper potiores fuisse gloriamini; Sedem scilicet Apostolicam colere, an potius laedere? Num Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae jura, honores, privilegia et auctoritatem conservare, defendere, augere ac promovere, quod praevio consecrationi vestrae juramento pariter spondistis; an potius eadem jura convellere, honores imminuere, privilegia et auctoritatem velut in dubium revocare?

Et quidem cum, ut magnus olim fidenter aiebat Leo: Praeter illam Petram, quam Dominus in fundamento posuit, stabilis esse nequeat ulla constructio,<sup>9</sup> videte, venerabiles Fratres, ne ista porro causa sit, cur post tot annorum curricula, nunquam in ecclesiis vestris pax vera fuerit, nec unquam futura sit, nisi, ut vos ipsi non ita pridem loquebamini, profligandis erroribus Romanae Sedis invalescat auctoritas, et clara firmaque de rebus ad Catholicam fidem pertinentibus prolata sententia caliginem omnem discutiat, animos fluctuantes componat, dissidia prohibeat, Ecclesiae tranquillitatem, splendoremque restituat. Tum demum unanimes idipsum sentientes, et non erunt in vobis schismata, cum primae Sedi, unde sacerdotalis unitas exorta est, humili adhaesione consentietis: tunc a subditis vobis ovibus integram obedi-

7. Epist. Episc. Gall. ad Innocent. X, anno 1563.

8. Epist. Episc. Gall. ad Innocent. X, anno 1650.



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tiam exigetis, cum eam Romanae Ecclesiae, cui vos subiectos esse cognoscitis, pleno animo praestiteritis.

Maneat ergo, venerabiles Fratres, suus episcopali ordini honor et dignitas; sed quos posuerunt Patres nostri terminos non excedat; Romanam Ecclesiam ecclesiarum omnium Matrem ac Magistram nulli inferiores Antistites judicare aut docere praesumant, aut post ejus judicare judicium: “sed quae Romanus Pontifex (veteres vobis Gallicanos Canones recitamus) secundum suum sacrum ministerium, auctoritate Apostolica decreverit, in summa veneratione ab omnibus suscipiantur, et debita illi obedientia in omnibus conservetur,”<sup>10</sup> et maxime “ab his (ut olim Gallus Antistes et quidem non ignavus episcopalis amplificator juris admonuit), qui in illis regionibus habitant, in quibus divina gratia per ejus praedicationem omnes in fide genuit, et Catholico lacte enutrivit.”<sup>11</sup>

Non ut confundamus vos, haec scribimus; sed pro Pastoralis nostrae sollicitudine, quam vobis debemus impendere, ut fratres, et filios carissimos admonemus, rogamus, et obsecramus in Domino Jesu, ne effusa nimis de Apostolica Sede, amantissima Parente vestra, unde vobis religionis, propitio Christo, fons et origo manavit, ejusque Constitutionibus et Decretis scribendi, judicandive licentia caeteris per universam Dei Ecclesiam, offenculo sitis. Dispensatio enim Nobis credita est, et ad Nostrum tendit reatum, si, contra paternarum regulas sanctionum beati Petri ejusque Sedis causam deseramus; quoniam si negligenter ea, quae male usurpantur, omittimus, excessus viam aliis aperimus.

Nemo vos seducat inanibus verbis, aut falsa vobis pretendendae magis auctoritatis vestrae promissione, blandiatur. Discamus omnes non altum sapere, sed timere, cum scriptum sit: Rectorem te posuerunt, noli extolli:

9. S. Leon. Epist. 54, ad Marcian. Aug.

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cumque admonente Domino studere debeamus, ut, qui major est in nobis fiat sicut minor, pudeat et qui minores sunt, Majori se aequare, quin et praeferre quodammodo velle videantur. Charitatem sectemur, sine qua nihil sumus, quae non inflatur, non est ambitiosa, non quaerit quae sua sunt, et multo minus quae sua non sunt tentare praesumit. Maneat dispositio veritatis ipso Christi verbo firmata, quod etiamsi coelum et terra transierint, praeterire non potest, ut scilicet beatus Apostolus Petrus, cujus adhuc in sua Sede vivit potestas, et excellit auctoritas et cujus etiam dignitas in indigno haerede non deficit, confirmare debeat fratres suos non ipse a fratribus confirmari.<sup>12</sup> Unitatem demum Catholicae Ecclesiae, rejectis vanis et inutilibus contentionibus, quae magis quaestionem praestant, quam aedificationem Dei, firmiter custodiamus; unitatem scilicet illam quae, ut a majoribus nostris accepimus, in eo potissimum sita esse dignoscitur, ut, quamvis in populo Dei multi sacerdotes sint multique pastores; omnes tamen proprie regat Petrus, quos principaliter regit et Christus.<sup>13</sup>

Et apostolicam benedictionem vobis omnibus, Venerabiles Fratres, quos sincera in Christo charitate diligimus, quare et vobis liberius ad utilitatem vestram loquimur, peramanter impertimur.

Datum Romae, ad Sanctum Petrum, sub annulo Piscatoris, die decima quinta Januarii MDCCVI, Pontificatus nostri anno sexto.

10. Concil. Pontigon., cap. 2, tit. 9, anno 876.

11. Hincm. Rhem. in Praef. opusc. De divortio Lothar. et Thietbergae.

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### POPE CLEMENT XI AS A PERPETUAL MEMORIAL

To my Venerable Brother-Archbishops and Bishops, and beloved sons, the other men of the Church, gathered in Paris in the General Assembly of the French Clergy.

With great delight We have read, in the letters which you sent to Us, your congratulations upon the Constitution which We recently issued, and which you have received, concerning the need to subdue the insolence of restless men, and this gives Us new confidence that Our labor was not in vain, and that you shall attend to the duty of your pastoral office, so that, with the last vestiges of the Jansenist error completely abolished by the supreme judgment of the Apostolic See, all might at last perceive this fact and be perfect with one heart and with one mind. Yet, such copious matter for Our rejoicing was certainly disturbed by the notice of several letters and other published writings sent to Our Apostolate, which seem to have no other purpose than to allege and imply that the supreme authority of the aforementioned See should be attacked on all sides, as if there were today no object worthier of episcopal zeal than to diminish the power of the See of blessed Peter, whence arose the Episcopate itself and all the authority which it has to its name.<sup>1</sup> And what was even more remarkable to Us, and indeed, more bitterly deplorable: We saw these attempts being made at the very

12. "A te emendari Ecclesiam Romanam nihil opus erat; nam illa... potestatem a Christo accepit regendi alias et gubernandi, confirmandi et corrigendi, non ut ipsa confirmetur ab aliis. Et tu, inquit Salvator ad Petrum, aliquando conversus, confirma fratres tuos. Non dixit: Confirmare a fratribus tuis, sed confirma." (Josephus Episcop. Methonensis ad Marc. Eugen. Ephesin. Metropolitanum.)

13. S. Leo, Serm. 3, de Assumptione sua.

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same time when you thought your Churches to be infected with errors that must be uprooted, and considered your power clearly unequal to the task, and We were willingly providing you with the help and assistance of the Primal See, which you had implored and which the most Christian and most religious King himself had urgently requested, inasmuch as We embrace you and your Churches with paternal charity.

We recognized in this the usual schemes of certain villainous men who, while they do not dare to profess, for fear of punishment, the Jansenist poison which they harbor in their hearts, endeavor to declare as it were a secret war against the Roman See, by which they consider themselves sore oppressed, and strive by importunate questions, which are ruinous to Catholic Unity, to sow the seeds of dissensions. It is all too lamentable, moreover, that you, Venerable Brothers, whose duty it was to rebuke the troublemakers, yielded instead to their suggestions and thoughtlessly extended your hands to those disturbers of the churches.

But then, who has constituted you Our judges? Is it becoming for inferiors to make decisions concerning the authority of their superior and to subject his judgments to examination? Be it said without offence, Venerable Brothers, it is intolerable that a handful of Bishops, even Bishops of very powerful churches whose honours and prerogatives derive exclusively from the favour and kindness of the Roman Pontiff, should raise their heads against the author of their dignity and honour<sup>2</sup> and attack the rights of the first See which rest not on a human but on a divine authority.

1. Innocent I, Epistle to the Fathers of the Second Council of Carthage, 417 A.D.

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Ask your Elders and they will tell you, that it does not become particular superiors to suppress the Decrees of the Holy See, but to carry them into effect;<sup>3</sup> and since you adduce the words of the bishops of Gaul to Pope Saint Leo the Great congratulating him upon his agreement with them in the faith, you could also learn from those same words what the real duties are of Superiors like you (whom one would not blush to imitate) when receiving the definitions of the Apostolic See: anyone who does not neglect the Sacraments of Redemption, they say, has written upon the tablets of his heart the writings of Your Apostolate, in the same way as the symbol of faith [the Creed], and has resolutely committed them to memory, so as to be more ready to confound the errors of the heretics.<sup>4</sup>

The most distinguished Gallic Bishops of old, therefore, were far from arrogating to themselves the right of nullifying the Constitutions of the Apostolic See, which they accepted as they did the Creed itself, nor did they think that much time or effort should be expended in determining whether to execute them; rather, they were satisfied with committing their contents to memory so as to confound the heretics; and furthermore, they taught (and it greatly behoves you to take note) that the definitions of the Roman Pontiff should not be judged in terms of their own faith, but rather they acknowledged their own faith to be firm and valid insofar as it agreed with the definition of the Roman Pontiff. Listen to them as they continue their letter to Saint Leo: “Every believer must adhere to your teaching, after God, in order to keep the faith that he has believed; so also must the unbeliever, so that, having come to know the truth, he

2. Innocent I, Epistle to the Council of Mileve.

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might abandon his unbelief and, imbued now with the light of apostolic instruction, leave the darkness of his error.”<sup>35</sup> This is the faith of our Fathers, this is the Tradition of our Ancestors, this is the constant rule of the ancient Gallic churches, as well as of the other churches throughout the Christian world, a rule which can in no way be shaken, whatever novel devices of human ingenuity may attack it.

Nor does your brilliant erudition in Sacred Scripture, Venerable Brothers, or your diligent investigation of the earliest monuments of the Church allow you to ignore the fact that “every Church throughout the world knows that the See of blessed Peter the Apostle certainly has the right of judging every Church, while no one is permitted to judge its judgment.” Indeed, if for example it has seemed fitting to follow in Our Apostolic Constitution a form which was not devised by Us recently, but rather was used by Our predecessors over the centuries, a form whereby we instruct, assign, and command all the Archbishops and Bishops to carry it out and to observe it conscientiously, then you could have gathered from it that We, in this same matter, are not asking your advice, or seeking your votes, or awaiting your judgment, but enjoining your obedience; that obedience, please note, which you have promised to blessed Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, and to the holy Roman Church, and to Us and to Our Apostolic Decrees and Mandates by a solemn oath at the

3. “We (Bishops), who carry out the sacred canons and the Decrees of the See of the Roman Pontiffs under the authority of that same Apostolic Rock, as nothing other than promoters of those who judge justly and executors of their just judgments, render obedience to the Holy Spirit, Who has spoken through them, and to the Apostolic See, whence flows the stream of Religion and of Ecclesiastical order and of canonical judgment.” (Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims, vol. II Works, p. 462). The same Hincmar, *ibid.*, p. 250, addressing the Supreme Pontiff, says, “My duty is to unite my judgments to yours in obedience, and not to nullify your judgments.”
4. Letter of Ravennius and of other Gallic Bishops to Pope Saint Leo.

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very moment of your elevation to your sacred office.<sup>6</sup>

It is truly painful, Venerable Brothers, for us to be involved in this despicable argument; mindful, indeed, of our misery, let us not strive to appear to be lording it over the clergy, but rather we would wish to be subject to every human creature for God's sake, were it only given Us to sit at a lower place! But truly, since We are pleading a cause which is by no means our own private matter, but rather that of the Apostolic See of blessed Peter, in which We preside, not only undeservedly but also reluctantly, by the disposition of the divine will, after We have long remained silent about much for the sake of peace and for the love of unity, and have tolerated, by the charity of Christ which is patient, and by a thoroughly paternal indulgence, many things wrongly done against the rights and dignity of this same Apostolic See – while along an inordinate and crooked course, with transgressions going unpunished, the excesses are increasing day by day and the sins, which were tolerated for the sake of restoring the faith and for love of concord, are becoming more frequent – it is not honorable or permissible for Us to ignore them or to be silent; We, though unworthy, surely take the place of the Only-begotten Son of God, Our Savior, Jesus Christ on earth; We can and must no longer neglect it.

For We see, Venerable Brothers (and We are compelled to say this with heartfelt paternal sorrow) many things being written openly these days, by those who profess to be Catholics, which diminish and subvert the rights of this Holy See, indeed with such liberty and license, to say the least, that they can surely be of no benefit or use to anyone, except to

5. Ibid.

6. "I shall observe with all my might the apostolic decrees, ordinances, judgments, arrangements, reservations, provisions, and mandates, and I shall make others observe them.... I shall receive the apostolic mandates humbly, and shall carry them out as faithfully as possible." (Oath for a bishop at his consecration.)

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delight the heterodox enemies of the Church and to cause scandal and lamentation for the orthodox and the pious. Moreover, for them to consent at any time to those same writings of a few Bishops is all too deplorable, and We cannot tolerate it in the least, as if they should now consider practically invalid and almost uncertain those same apostolic judgments passed by the Supreme Pontiffs to determine the rule of faith which, a few years previously, in letters sent to our predecessors, every Church in France openly declared to be founded upon the divine authority which is supreme throughout the Church Universal,<sup>7</sup> unless they be supported by your subsequent judgment, that is, the judgment of a few Bishops.

You did well, Venerable Brothers, admirably following in the footsteps of your predecessors, to have recourse to the Apostolic See, as to the stronghold of faith, the Metropolis of all discipline and the center of Catholic unity, to which all the plumb-lines of the churches must be drawn, lest they be ruined by veering off to some other guide, and also to take refuge, faithfully no less than humbly, in the faith of blessed Peter which never fails,<sup>8</sup> whereby the errors of the heretics are overthrown with a peremptory decree. Why have you gone over so soon almost to another Gospel, as if you were attempting to prove the stronghold of faith and metropolis of discipline less safe? It seems that you are unwilling to draw your lines from the center of Catholic unity, but are demanding that the center conform to your lines. Are you ashamed, then, to acknowledge the faith of blessed Peter which never fails?

Consider, I beg you, and ponder earnestly in the sight of the Supreme Pastor, Who will judge us all in His truth, what it is that you declare to be your duty and honor, wherein, as you boast, the French have always excelled: to pay respect to the Apostolic See, or to offend it? Is it to preserve, defend,



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augment and promote the rights, honors, privileges and authority of the Holy Roman Church, which you likewise promised in the oath preceding your consecration; or is it rather to weaken those same rights, diminish its honors, and, as it were, call its privileges and authority into doubt?

But since, in the confident words of St. Leo the Great, no building can endure unless it rests on the Rock of which the Lord made the foundation,<sup>9</sup> see, Venerable Brothers, whether this is not the explanation why, after the lapse of so many years, true peace has never prevailed in your churches and never can prevail, unless (as you yourselves said not so long ago) the authority of the Roman See be strengthened in order to overthrow error, and a clear, firm judgment be passed on things pertaining to the Catholic faith, so as to dispel all darkness, settle wavering minds, prevent disagreements, and restore the tranquility and splendor of the Church. Then at last you shall all speak the same thing, and there shall be no schisms among you when you consent to adhere humbly to the first See, whence priestly unity is derived; only then shall you demand complete obedience from the sheep subject to you, when you shall have rendered it wholeheartedly to the Roman Church, to which you acknowledge yourselves to be subject.

Therefore, Venerable Brothers, let the episcopal order retain its honor and dignity; but let it not exceed the limits which our Fathers have set; let no inferior Hierarchs presume to judge or to teach the Roman Church, Mother and Teacher of all churches, or to judge after she has rendered judgment: “but rather let those things which the Roman Pontiff has decreed” (We are quoting to you from the ancient

7. Letter of the French Bishops to Innocent X, 1650 A.D.

8. Ibid.

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Gallican Canons) “in keeping with his sacred ministry, by his apostolic authority, be received by all with the utmost reverence, and be kept in every respect with the obedience due to him,”<sup>10</sup> and especially “by those” (as the Bishop of Gall admonished, who was by no means idle in increasing the rights of bishops) “who inhabit those regions in which divine grace, through their preaching, begot them all in faith and nourished them with Catholic milk.”<sup>11</sup>

We do not write these things to confound you, but rather in the pastoral concern which We are obliged to show for you. We admonish you as Brothers and as Our dearest children. We ask and beseech you in the Lord Jesus, lest you be a stumbling block to others throughout the universal Church of God by a too-extravagant freedom in writing about the Apostolic See, your most loving Mother, from which flowed for you by Christ’s favor, the font and source of religion, and in judging her Constitutions and Decrees. For a stewardship has been entrusted to Us, and We would stand accused if, contrary to the terms of the paternal sanctions of blessed Peter and of his See, We were to abandon the cause; for if We negligently overlook those things which are wrongly usurped, We open the way to other excesses.

Let no man deceive you with vain words, nor flatter you with a false promise of further extending your authority. Let us all learn not to know lofty things, but to fear, as it is written [Ecclesiasticus 32:1]: Have they made thee ruler? Be not lifted up. Since we must endeavor, as the Lord admonishes, that he that is the greatest among us shall be the least; let those who are lesser blush to compare themselves with their Superior, so that they may not seem to desire some sort of preferment. Let us eagerly pursue the virtue of charity, with-

9. St. Leo, Epistle 54 to Marcian Augustus.

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out which we are nothing: charity is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own; much less does she presume to deal with things which are not her own. May that arrangement of truth endure, which was established by Christ's own word, which cannot pass away, even if heaven and earth should pass away – namely, that the blessed Apostle Peter, whose power and authority live to this day in his eminent See, and whose dignity is not wanting even in an unworthy heir, must confirm his brethren and not be confirmed by his brethren.<sup>12</sup> Let us now at last resolutely preserve the unity of the Catholic Church, having rejected the vain and useless disputes which are more conducive to theological inquiry than to the edification of the faithful; that unity, indeed, which, as we have heard from our predecessors, is recognized as depending chiefly upon the fact that, although there are many priests and many pastors in the people of God, nevertheless, Peter in a special way rules all those who are also ruled in the first place by Christ.<sup>13</sup>

And upon you all, Venerable Brothers, whom We love in Christ with sincere charity, which is why We speak to you so freely for your advantage, We most cordially bestow Our apostolic blessing.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, under the seal of the Fisherman, on the fifteenth day of January, 1706, in the sixth year of our Pontificate.

10. Council of Pontigon., chapter 2, title 9, 876 A.D.

11. Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims, Preface to the treatise "On the divorce of Lothar and Thietberga".

12. "There was no need for you to correct the Roman Church; for she... received from Christ the authority to rule, govern, strengthen and correct the other churches, not so as to be confirmed by them. And thou, said the Savior to Peter, being once converted, confirm thy brethren. He did not say: Be confirmed by thy brethren, but rather, confirm." (Joseph, bishop of Methon. [Medina?] to Marcus Eugenius, Metropolitan of Ephesus.)

13. St. Leo, Sermon 3 on his Elevation.

## **First Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ**

**Pius, Bishop, Servant of the Servants of  
God, with the Approval of the Sacred  
Council for Perpetual Remembrance**

The Eternal Pastor and Bishop of our souls, in order to continue for all time the life-giving work of His Redemption, determined to build up the Holy Church, wherein, as in the house of the living God, all who believe might be united in the bond of one faith and one charity. Wherefore, before He entered into His glory, He prayed unto the Father, not for the Apostles only, but for those also who through their preaching should come to believe in Him that all might be one, even as He the Son and the Father are one.<sup>1</sup> As then He sent the Apostles whom He had chosen to Himself from the world, as He Himself had been sent by the Father;<sup>2</sup> so He willed that there should ever be pastors and teachers in His Church to the end of the world. And in order that the episcopate also might be one and undivided, and that by means of a closely united priesthood the multitude of the faithful might be kept secure in the oneness of faith and communion, He set Blessed Peter over the rest of the Apostles, and fixed in him the abiding principle of this twofold unity and its visible foundation, in the strength of which the everlasting temple should arise, and the Church

1 John xvii. 20 f.

2 Ib. xx. 21.

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in the firmness of that faith should lift her majestic front to heaven.<sup>3</sup> And seeing that the gates of hell with daily increase of hatred are gathering their strength on every side to upheave the foundation laid by God's own hand, and so, if that might be, to overthrow the Church: We, therefore, for the preservation, safe-keeping, and increase of the Catholic flock, with the approval of the Sacred Council, do judge it to be necessary to propose to the belief and acceptance of all the faithful, in accordance with the ancient and constant faith of the universal Church, the doctrine touching the institution, perpetuity, and nature of the sacred Apostolic Primacy, in which is found the strength and solidity of the entire Church; and at the same time to proscribe and condemn the contrary errors so hurtful to the flock of Christ.

3 From Sermon iv, chap. ii, of St. Leo the Great, A.D. 440, vol. 1, p. 17, of edition of Ballerini, Venice, 1753; read in the eighth lection on the feast of St. Peter's Chair at Antioch, February 22.

## Appendix

### Chapter I

#### *On the Institution of the Apostolic Primacy in Blessed Peter*

We therefore teach and declare that, according to the testimony of the Gospel, the primacy of jurisdiction over the universal Church of God was immediately and directly promised and given to Blessed Peter the Apostle by Christ the Lord. For it was to Simon alone, to whom He had already said: “Thou shalt be called Cephas,”<sup>4</sup> that the Lord, after the confession made by him, saying, “Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God,” addressed these solemn words, “Blessed art thou, Simon, Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood have not revealed it to thee, but my Father, who is in heaven. And I say to thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.”<sup>5</sup> And it was upon Simon alone that Jesus, after His resurrection, bestowed the jurisdiction of Chief Pastor and Ruler over all His fold in the words, “Feed My lambs, feed My sheep.”<sup>6</sup> At open variance with this clear doctrine of Holy Scripture, as it has ever been understood by the Catholic Church, are the perverse opinions of those who, while they distort the form of government established by Christ the Lord in His Church, deny that Peter in his simple person preferably to all the other Apostles, whether taken separately or together,

4 John i. 42.

5 Matt. xvi 16 ff.

6 John xxi. 15, 17.

## The Papal Monarchy

was endowed by Christ with a true and proper primacy of jurisdiction; or of those who assert that the same primacy was not bestowed immediately and directly upon Blessed Peter himself, but upon the Church, and through the Church on Peter as her minister.

(*Canon*) If anyone, therefore, shall say that Blessed Peter the Apostle was not appointed the Prince of the Apostles and the visible head of the whole Church Militant, or that the same directly and immediately received from the same our Lord Jesus Christ a primacy of honor only, and not of true and proper jurisdiction; let him be anathema.

## Appendix

### Chapter II

#### *On the Perpetuity of the Primacy of Blessed Peter in the Roman Pontiffs*

That which the Prince of Shepherds and great shepherd of the sheep, Jesus Christ our Lord, established in the person of the Blessed Apostle Peter to secure the perpetual welfare and lasting good of the Church, must, by the same institution, necessarily remain unceasingly in the Church, which, being founded upon the Rock, will stand firm to the end of the world. For none can doubt, and it is known to all ages, that the holy and Blessed Peter, the Prince and chief of the Apostles, the pillar of the faith and foundation of the Catholic Church, received the keys of the kingdom from our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind, and lives, presides and judges to this day, always in his successors the Bishops of the Holy See of Rome, which was founded by Him and consecrated by His Blood.<sup>7</sup> Whence, whosoever succeeds to Peter in this see does by the institution of Christ Himself obtain the primacy of Peter over the whole Church. The disposition made by Incarnate Truth (*dispositio veritatis*) therefore remains, and Blessed Peter, abiding in the rock's strength which he received (*in accepta fortitudine petrae perseverans*), has not abandoned the direction of the Church.<sup>8</sup> Wherefore it has at all times been necessary that every particular Church – that is to say, the faithful throughout the world – should come to the Church of Rome on account of the greater principedom which it has

7 From the Acts (session third) of the Third General Council, namely, that of Ephesus, A.D. 431, Labbe's *Councils*, vol. viii, p. 1154, Venice edition of 1728. See also letter of St. Peter Chrysologus to Eutyches, in life prefixed to his works, p. 13, Venice, 1840.

8 From Sermon III, chap. iii, of St. Leo the Great, vol. 1, p. 12.



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received; that all being associated in the unity of that see whence the rights of venerable communion spread to all, might grow together as members of one head in the compact unity of the body.<sup>9</sup>

(*Canon*) If, then, anyone shall say that it is not by the institution of Christ the Lord, or by divine right, that Blessed Peter has a perpetual line of successors in the primacy over the universal Church; or that the Roman Pontiff is not the successor of Blessed Peter in this primacy; let him be anathema.

9 From St. Irenaeus *against Heresies*, book III, cap. iii, p. 175, Benedictine edition, Venice, 1734; and Acts of Synod of Aquileia, A.D. 381, Labbe's *Councils*, vol. ii, p. 1185, Venice, 1721.

## Appendix

### Chapter III

#### *On the Power and Nature of the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff*

Wherefore, resting on plain testimonies of the Sacred Writings, and adhering to the plain and express decrees both of Our predecessors the Roman pontiffs, and of the general councils, We renew the definition of the ecumenical Council of Florence, by which all the faithful of Christ must believe that the Truly Apostolic See and the Roman pontiff possesses the primacy over the whole world; and that the Roman pontiff is the successor of Blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and is true Vicar of Christ, and Head of the whole Church, and Father and teacher of all Christians; and that full power was given to him in Blessed Peter, by Jesus Christ our Lord, to rule, feed and govern the universal Church: as is also contained in the Acts of the ecumenical councils and in the sacred canons.

Hence We teach and declare that by the appointment of our Lord the Roman Church possesses a sovereignty of ordinary power over all other Churches, and that this power of jurisdiction of the Roman pontiff, which is truly episcopal, is immediate; to which all, of whatsoever rite and dignity, both pastors and faithful, both individually and collectively, are bound, by their duty of hierarchical subordination and true obedience, to submit, not only in matters which belong to faith and morals, but also in those that appertain to the discipline and government of the Church throughout the world; so that the Church of Christ may be one flock under one supreme pastor, through the preservation of unity, both of communion and of profession of the same faith,

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with the Roman pontiff. This is the teaching of Catholic truth, from which no one can deviate without loss of faith and of salvation.

But so far is this power of the supreme pontiff from being any prejudice to that ordinary and immediate power of episcopal jurisdiction, by which bishops, who have been set by the Holy Ghost to succeed and hold the place of the Apostles,<sup>10</sup> feed and govern each his own flock, as true pastors, that this same power is really asserted, strengthened and protected by the supreme and universal pastor; in accordance with the words of St. Gregory the Great, "My honour is the honour of the whole Church. My honour is the firm strength of my brethren. Then am I truly honoured, when the honour due to each and all is not withheld."<sup>11</sup>

Further, from this supreme power possessed by the Roman Pontiff of governing the universal Church, it follows that, in the exercise of this office, he has the right of free communication with the pastors of the whole Church, and with their flocks, that they may be taught and ruled by him in the way of salvation. Wherefore We condemn and reprobate the opinions of those who hold that the communication between the supreme Head and the pastors and their flocks can lawfully be impeded; or who make this communication subject to the will of the secular power, so as to maintain that whatever is done by the Apostolic See, or by its authority, for the government of the Church, cannot have force or value unless it be confirmed by the assent of the secular power.

And since, by the divine right of Apostolic primacy, one Roman pontiff is placed over the universal Church,

10 Council of Trent. Sess. XXXIII. c. iv; Acts xx. 28.

11 From the Letters of St. Gregory the Great, book VIII, 30, vol. II, p. 919, Benedictine edition, Paris, 1705.

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We further teach and declare that he is the supreme judge of the faithful,<sup>12</sup> and that in all causes, the decision of which belongs to the Church, recourse may be had to his tribunal,<sup>13</sup> but that none may reopen the judgment of the Apostolic See, than whose authority there is no greater, nor can any lawfully review its judgment.<sup>14</sup> Wherefore they err from the right path of truth who assert that it is lawful to appeal from the judgments of the Roman pontiffs to an ecumenical council, as to an authority higher than that of the Roman pontiff.

(*Canon*) If then any shall say that the Roman pontiff has the office merely of inspection or direction, and not full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the universal Church, not only in things which belong to faith and morals, but also in those things which relate to the discipline and government of the Church spread throughout the world; or assert that he possesses merely the principal part, and not all the fullness of this supreme power; or that this power which he enjoys is not ordinary and immediate, both over each and all the Churches and over each and all the pastors of the faithful; let him be anathema.

12 From a Brief of Pius VI, *Super soliditate*, of November 28, 1786.

13 From the Acts of the Fourteenth General Council (Second of Lyons), A.D. 1274. Labbe's *Councils*, vol. xiv, p. 512.

14 From Letter VIII of Pope Nicholas I, A.D. 858, to the Emperor Michael, in Labbe's *Councils*, vol IX, pp. 1339 and 1570.

## Chapter IV

### *Concerning the Infallible Teaching of the Roman Pontiff*

Moreover, that the supreme power of teaching (*magisterii*) is also included in the Apostolic primacy, which the Roman pontiff, as the successor of Peter, Prince of the Apostles, possesses over the whole Church, this Holy See has always held, the perpetual practice of the Church confirms, and ecumenical councils also have declared, especially those in which the East with the West met in the union of faith and charity. For the Fathers of the Fourth Council of Constantinople, following in the footsteps of their predecessors, gave forth this solemn profession: The first condition of salvation is to keep the rule of the true faith. And because the sentence of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot be passed by, Who said, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church,”<sup>15</sup> these things which have been said are proved by events, because in the Apostolic See the Catholic religion has always been kept undefiled, and her well-known doctrine has been kept holy. Desiring therefore, not to be in the least degree separated from the faith and doctrine of this See, we hope that we may deserve to be in the one communion, which the Apostolic See preaches, in which is the entire and true solidity of the Christian religion.<sup>16</sup>

And, with the approval of the Second Council of Lyons, the Greeks professed that: “the holy Roman Church enjoys supreme and full primacy and principedom over the whole Catholic Church, which it truly and humbly acknowl-

15 Matt. xvi. 18.

16 From the Formula of St. Hormisdas, subscribed by the Fathers of the Eighth General Council (Fourth of Constantinople), A.D. 869. Labbe's *Councils*, vol. v, pp. 583, 622.

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edges that it has received with the plenitude of power from our Lord Himself in the person of Blessed Peter, Prince and Head of the Apostles, whose successor the Roman pontiff is; and as the Apostolic See is bound before all others to defend the truth of faith, so also, if any questions regarding faith shall arise, they must be defined by its judgment.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, the Council of Florence defined that:<sup>18</sup> “the Roman Pontiff is the true Vicar of Christ, and the head of the whole Church and the father and teacher of all Christians; and that to him in Blessed Peter was delivered by our Lord Jesus Christ the full power of feeding, ruling and governing the whole Church.”

To satisfy this pastoral duty, Our predecessors ever made unwearied efforts that the salutary doctrine of Christ might be propagated among all the nations of the earth, and with equal care watched that it might be preserved genuine and pure where it had been received. Therefore the bishops of the whole world, now singly, now assembled in synod, following the long-established custom of Churches<sup>19</sup> and the form of the ancient rule,<sup>20</sup> sent word to this Apostolic See of those dangers especially which sprang up in matters of faith, that there the losses of faith might be most effectually repaired where the faith cannot fail.<sup>21</sup> And the Roman pontiffs, according to the exigencies of times and circumstances, sometimes assembling ecumenical councils, or asking for the mind of the

17 From the Acts of the Fourteenth General Council (Second of Lyons), A.D. 1274. Labbe, vol. xiv, p. 512.

18 From the Acts of the Seventeenth General Council (that of Florence), A.D. 1438; Labbe, vol. xviii, p. 526.

19 From a letter of St. Cyril of Alexandria to Pope St. Celestine I, A.D. 422, vol. vi, p. 36, Paris edition of 1638.

20 From a rescript of St. Innocent I to the Council of Milevis, A.D. 402. Labbe, vol. III, p. 47.

21 From a letter of St. Bernard to Pope Innocent II, A.D. 1130; Epist. 191, vol. IV, p. 433, Paris edition of 1742.

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Church scattered throughout the world, sometimes by particular synods, sometimes using other helps which Divine Providence supplied, defined as to be held those things which with the help of God they had recognized as conformable with the sacred Scriptures and Apostolic traditions. For the Holy Spirit was not promised to the successors of Peter, that by His revelation they might make known new doctrine, but that by His assistance they might inviolably keep and faithfully expound the revelation or deposit of faith delivered through the Apostles. And indeed all the venerable Fathers have embraced and the holy orthodox Doctors have venerated and followed their apostolic doctrine; knowing most fully that this See of Saint Peter remains ever free from all blemish of error, according to the divine promise of the Lord Our Saviour made to the Prince of His disciples: "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren."<sup>22</sup>

This gift, then, of truth and never-failing faith was conferred by heaven upon Peter and his successors in this Chair, that they might perform their high office for the salvation of all; that the whole flock of Christ, kept away by them from the poisonous food of error, might be nourished with the pasture of heavenly doctrine; that, the occasion of schism being removed, the whole Church might be kept one, and resting in its foundation, might stand firm against the gates of hell.

But since in this very age, in which the salutary efficacy of the Apostolic office is most of all required, not a few are found who take away from its authority, We judge it altogether necessary solemnly to assert the prerogative which the Only-begotten Son of God vouchsafed to join with the supreme pastoral office.

22 Luke xxii. 32. See also the Acts of the Sixth General Council, A.D. 680; Labbe, vol. vii, p. 659.

## First Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ

Therefore, faithfully adhering to the tradition received from the beginning of the Christian faith, for the glory of God our Saviour, the exaltation of the Catholic religion, and the salvation of Christian people, with the approval of the sacred council, We teach and define that it is a dogma divinely revealed; that the Roman pontiff when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when, in discharge of the office of pastor and teacher of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, is, by the divine assistance promised to him in Blessed Peter, possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed that His church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding faith or morals; and that, therefore, such definitions of the Roman pontiff are of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church, irreformable.<sup>23</sup>

But if anyone – which may God avert! – presume to contradict this our definition, let him be anathema.

Given at Rome in public session, solemnly held in the Vatican Basilica in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and seventy, on the eighteenth day of July, in the twenty-fifth year of Our Pontificate.

In conformity with the original.  
Joseph, Bishop of St. Polten,  
Secretary to the Vatican Council.

23 In the words used by Pope Nicholas I, note 13, and in the Synod of Quedlinburg, A.D. 1085, "It is allowed to none to revise its judgment, and to sit in judgment upon what it has judged." – Labbe, vol. xii, p. 679.



## About the Author

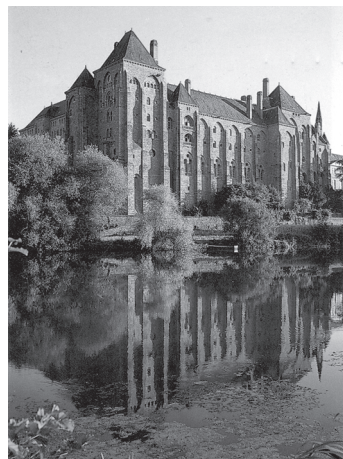


*Dom Guéranger*

The Church in the 19th Century required a man of genius and great vision like Dom Guéranger if she was going to overcome the well-orchestrated onslaughts of the masonic enlightenment. What he accomplished in his lifetime is astonishing. After all, it was less than fifteen years before his birth in 1805, that a revolutionary government had actually proscribed the

visible Church in France, and thousands of priests and religious were driven into exile for not abjuring the Faith. At least one thousand others were martyred.

Dom Guéranger's France needed nothing less than a total restoration from top to bottom. Among the achievements of Guéranger, and his spiritual sons and daughters, were: the complete restoration of the Roman Liturgy in France (including Gregorian Chant), the re-establishment of the Benedictine order, the polemical and apologetic defense of the Church and Catholic life in areas too numerous to mention, a wealth of theological scholarship that helped promote two ex-cathedra definitions – Papal Infallibility and the Immaculate Conception. (Pius IX gratefully attested to this fact in a Brief.) Aside from all this, he was also responsible for the founding of the abbey at Solesmes.



*Solesmes on the River Sarthe*